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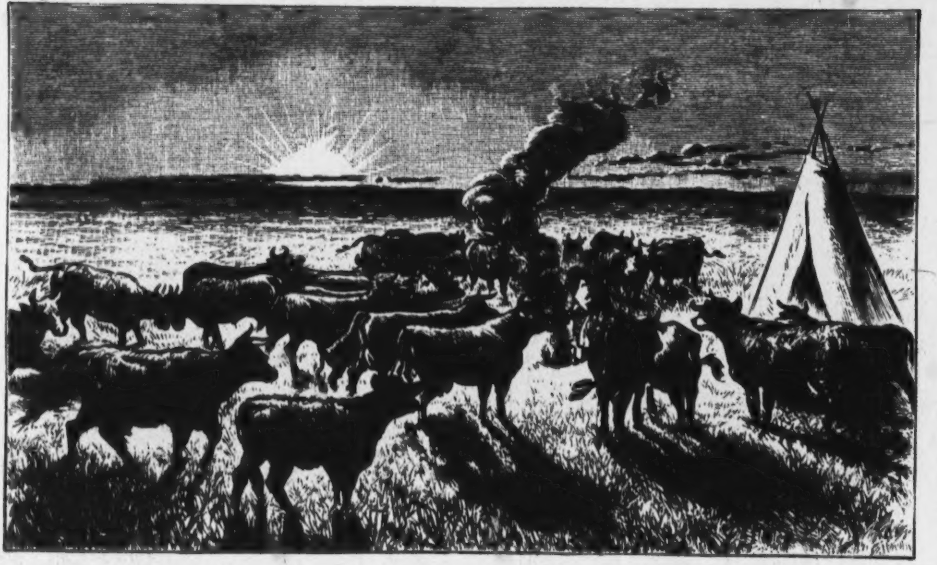

'The cattle seemed to be deeply interested in the proceedings.'

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LIFE ON A RANCH

RANCH NOTES

IN

KANSAS, COLORADO, THE INDIAN TERRITORY,
AND NORTHERN TEXAS

BY

REGINALD ALDRIDGE

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS

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INTRODUCTION.

In these days, when many young men are turning their attention to stock-raising in the 'far West,' it may perhaps not be uninteresting to read the actual experiences of one who has been engaged in the business for several years.

With this idea I have jotted down whatever I could remember that seemed likely to interest the general reader, or to assist any one in forming an opinion as regards the suitability of the life in connection with his own predilections and pocket-book.

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I do not pretend to say that any particular capacity or foresight on my part is shown by the steps that I have taken. On the contrary, I am inclined, in a great measure, to attribute such success as I have met with to good luck, or, perhaps I ought rather to say, to that 'Divinity which shapes our ends, rough-hew them how we will.'

All I can do is to lay my experiences before the public, hoping that they will accept them as evidences of my desire to be useful, and regard my shortcomings leniently.

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RANCH NOTES.

CHAPTER I.

In the summer of 1877 I found myself, like many a better man in England, 'out of a job.' I had duly served my term as pupil to the chief engineer of a western railway, and had obtained a temporary appointment on the expiration of that period. But new enterprises were becoming very scarce, there was a general depression of business, and the directors of the Great Western Railway determined to defer the construction of a new branch line on the engineering staff of which I had been promised a position.

Under these circumstances I cast about me to see if there was any more hopeful opening to be found for the employment of my energies and the bettering of my fortune. There had been during that year several letters in the 'Field,' from a correspondent signing himself 'St. Kames,' written from Kansas and Colorado, in the United States of America. The letters, I thought, presented a decidedly favourable view of those regions, and I finally made up my mind to go out there, though I had not at that time any very clear idea of what I should turn my hand to after my arrival. On talking over the matter with my friends there seemed to be a general vagueness of opinion as regarded the geography, climate, and productions of those States. One man to whom I wrote, hinting that any letters of introduction would be acceptable, replied that he had but one friend in those parts, the Colorado beetle, and, though intimately acquainted with him by reputation, he had never had actually the pleasure of meeting him. So that when I finally started for this *terra incognita* I did not know even the name of a single resident there, with the exception of a few that 'St. Kames' had mentioned in the 'Field.'

As I was residing in the neighbourhood of Bristol, I took a berth on board the 'Somerset,' belonging to the Great Western line of steamships, and sailed for New York early in August, where we arrived after a voyage of about twelve days, during which nothing worthy of remark occurred. We had the usual amount of fog and rain, with an occasional fine day that seems to fall ordinarily to the lot of Atlantic passengers.

During the voyage I made the acquaintance of a gentleman and his wife who had been farming in Kansas for seven years, and were returning from a holiday in England. They were kind enough to give me an invitation to visit them at their farm, which I very gladly accepted.

There is no occasion for me to describe New York. That has been already done often enough. I stayed, during the short time I was there, at the Astor House, which is conveniently situated for business, and was formerly, I believe, a fashionable hotel. Travellers now, however, usually prefer going farther up town, where they will be nearer the theatres and other places of amusement. On the evening of the third day after my arrival I started on the Erie Railway for Denver. I reached Chicago, about nine hundred miles from New York, without having to change, although there was a change of gauge on the way, I think at Mansfield. In order to avoid disturbing the passengers in the sleeping-car, it was hoisted bodily by hydraulic machinery, and the bogies on which it runs were removed and replaced by others suitable to the new gauge. We halted at Chicago two or three hours, which I occupied by taking a stroll through the city, and could not help feeling surprised at the number of magnificent buildings which have sprung up since the great fire.

From Chicago I proceeded by the Rock Island and Pacific Railway, crossing the Mississippi River at Rock Island and the Missouri River at Leavenworth, after which we went on through Kansas by the Kansas Pacific Railway. The eastern part of Kansas appeared to be a fertile country, and fields of dark-green maize were flourishing on each side of the line, with frequent farm-houses, built generally of wood. As we reached the centre of the State signs of cultivation soon disappeared, as well as human habitations, except at the stations, where there was usually a little cluster of wooden houses. The last part of the journey through Western Kansas and Eastern Colorado was dreary in the extreme, nothing but brown prairie on every side, without a tree. Now and then a few cattle might be seen, or a man on horseback, or an emigrant's white-topped waggon (sometimes fancifully designated a 'prairie schooner'); but often for miles and miles no sign of life would be visible, with the exception, perhaps, of a startled hawk, a prairie wolf, or a little band of antelope.

As we draw near Denver no difference in the aspect of the country is visible, except that the snow-clad peaks of the Rocky Mountains begin to loom up in the distance. And this is one thing that makes Denver so striking to the West-bound traveller. There is no gradual approach to civilisation, but after passing over hundreds of miles of desolate and forsaken-looking country, and feeling as if he had left all the pleasant things of life far behind, he suddenly finds himself in a handsome city replete with every comfort and luxury that his soul may desire.

This sudden contrast would not be so noticeable if travelling by the Atchison, Topeka, and Santa Fé Line, because on that route you pass several fashionable health resorts situated at the foot of the Rocky Mountains, between Pueblo and Denver.

After I had been a couple of days at Denver I determined to go and see a gentleman that 'St. Kames' had mentioned as having a farm on Plum Creek, about thirty miles from Denver. I was able to get within about eight miles of his place by train, and as I could find no conveyance at the station I set out to walk to the farm. It was a beautiful day, and at starting I did not think a walk of eight miles any hardship, but before I got to the end of my trudge, which was nearly all uphill, I found that the heat of the sun, combined with the rarity of the air, takes a good deal out of a 'tenderfoot,' as a new-comer is called in those parts. I was hospitably received at the farm by the owner, his wife, and a little daughter. They had been there about six years, during which they had done a great deal of hard work. All the land had to be irrigated in order to make anything grow. This takes a great deal of labour, but gives you a fair assurance of a good crop. I learnt that wheat had averaged that year about twenty-eight bushels to the acre. They did not consider that much of a crop, but it is more than double the average yield of wheat in the United States. The inferences I drew from this visit were that an energetic man having but little to begin with might in a few years make a tolerably comfortable home at the foot of the Rocky Mountains in Colorado, but need not expect to acquire a fortune by farming there.

The next day I bade adieu to my host and hostess, and took advantage of a passing waggon to get a 'lift' down to the station. The driver informed me that he had been living in Kansas, but suffered so much from asthma that he had been obliged to come to Colorado, where his health had much improved. As it wanted a week or two of the time at which I had agreed to go and visit my friend of the 'Somerset' at his farm, I resolved to go into the mountains and have a little trout-fishing in the meantime. I started, therefore, for a farmhouse on Bear Creek, about forty or fifty miles from

Denver, where they undertook to board and lodge fishermen. The first part of the way was by rail; after that I went on in a mail waggon. The road followed up the stream, and we crossed and recrossed it on rude bridges about thirty times before I reached my destination. On our return one of the horses put his foot into a hole in one of the bridges and was thrown down, but fortunately not injured.

I found there was no scarcity of trout in Bear Creek, but they were generally small. In fact, the fishing was almost exactly similar to what one gets at Dartmoor in England. It was rather late in the season to make any large baskets, as the nights were getting decidedly cold in those high altitudes, and we had a little snow on one or two days, though it was still early in September. I took most of my fish with the fly, but the natives seem to prefer a grasshopper to anything artificial.

It was now about time to visit my Kansas friend, so I returned to Denver, and, leaving my heavy luggage there, started back over the Kansas Pacific Railway for Abilene, which was the nearest station to my friend's farm. There I hired a man to drive me to the farm, a distance of about twenty-eight miles. I found the place looking rather desolate, as was to be expected, as it had been left pretty much to take care of itself during the year that the owner passed in England. My friend was the son of an English clergyman; he had married at the age of twenty-one, and brought his wife out to Kansas; had there taken up 160 acres of land under the Homestead Act (besides buying a little railway land, I believe), and had farmed it for six or seven years. He did not at all encourage me to go and do likewise. He said his crops had often failed from the ravages of grasshoppers, drought, and so forth, and that he considered the country was fit only for stock-raising. I believe, however, that since that time farmers have done pretty well in that part of Kansas, and no plague of grasshoppers, or more properly of locusts, such as produced some years ago much consternation in those regions, has occurred since 1876.

About six or seven miles from my friend's house there lived an American and a Scotchman, who had a sheep-ranch. The American was very anxious to sell me his share of the business; so I arranged to go and stop a little while at the ranch and see what I thought of it. I therefore took leave of my hospitable friend and his wife, and moved into the sheep-ranch. As near as I remember they had about seven hundred sheep there, which were grazed out during the day under the charge of a Russian lad, and at night penned in a yard with a stone wall round it in which a light was kept burning all night to frighten away the coyotes or prairie wolves. They were very busy at the ranch putting up hay, which, with a little Indian corn, kept the sheep through the winter. While I was there I learnt how to make a fireguard for the protection of a range from prairie fires. Adjoining the sheep-ranch was a cattle-ranch belonging to a Swiss gentleman, a brother-in-law of the American sheep-man, and they made a common fireguard to go round both their ranges. The plan was to plough four furrows all round the outside of the ranges, and then another ring of four furrows was ploughed inside the first at a distance of about fifty yards. In order to make the operation of burning the guard safer, a mowing-machine had been run round on the outside of the outer ring of furrows and on the inside of the inner ring. The total length of the guard was about seven miles. After the ploughing and mowing were done, we proceeded to burn the guard. Two men fired the grass along the two sets of furrows, the furrows preventing the fire from getting into the range or out to the open country. Behind the men firing came two men with wet sacks, with which to beat out the fire in case it showed any inclination to jump the furrows. A fifth man drove a waggon which contained a tub of water in which to wet the sacks from time to time. The man firing on the leeward side of the guard would always precede the other by a little, so that when the flame was swept across by the wind it might be met by the back fire from the leeward furrows, which would prevent so much danger of its getting over into the grass beyond the guard. Of course it would not be safe to attempt to burn a guard when the wind was at all strong. The fireguard when completed presents a barrier of bare ground to an approaching prairie fire, which the latter is unable to cross for lack of combustible matter to feed on. It has to be renewed every autumn, as during the spring and summer it becomes overgrown with grass again.

There were a good many prairie chickens, or pinnated grouse, in those parts, and some wild ducks, which used to afford me amusement with the help of an old muzzle-loader I found at the ranch. I stayed there two or three weeks, and it appeared to me to be a tolerably prosperous concern. But I thought I should like to look about me a little more before settling down, so did not close the bargain with my American friend. Sheep-raising in Kansas seems to be a very profitable business—with one proviso, and that is, you must succeed in keeping your sheep alive. I have known two or three young fellows who tried their hands at it for a short time, but they seemed always to lose so many sheep that the profits all disappeared. One man who started a sheep-ranch, when winter was approaching built some sheds open at one side to shelter his sheep during the night. One night a big snow-storm came, and the snow drifted in under the sheds, and the next morning nearly half the flock were found smothered to death. Another man that I knew managed to get through the winter pretty well, but, having sheared his flock a little too early, they were caught in a cold rain just after losing their wool, and in the course of a few hours a large number perished from cold. These and other instances of severe losses of which I have heard may no doubt be chiefly attributed to want of skill on the part of those who had the care of the sheep, and certainly there have been successful sheep-raisers in Kansas, though I do not happen to have been personally acquainted with any; except, perhaps, my friends at the ranch, where I was staying. What was the further history of their sheep I am unable to say; but from the fact that the Scotchman who had the management of them appeared to be a very careful and hard-working man, and had been accustomed to the care of sheep all his life, I should expect them to have done well.

CHAPTER II.

I HAD some idea at this time of making a trip to California; in fact, when I left the sheep-ranch I had nearly made up my mind that that should be my next move. The nearest railway-station to the ranch was at Junction City, and, as I was almost out of ready money, I presented at the bank there a cheque on New York, which they undertook to collect for me. Probably the coffers of the bank would hardly have stood the strain of paying 100*l.* without notice; however, they let me have a small sum on account, and with that I resolved to make my way back to Denver, which would be on my way, if I went to California, and would be a pleasanter place to await the receipt of the balance than Junction City. But in order to see some of the southern part of Kansas I went from Junction City to Emporia, where I took a ticket by the Atchinson, Topeka, and Santa Fé Line.

On the way I stopped at a little place called Nickerson, which 'St. Kames' had mentioned in his travels. At this time Nickerson was represented by about four houses. I arrived there in the middle of the night, and, there being nothing in the shape of an hotel, the station-master took me to one of the houses, and roused up a man who was sleeping there, with a request that he would share his bed with me, to which he offered no demur. The next morning the station-master, who was also a doctor, a land agent, a coal merchant, and a farmer, undertook to do for me the honours of the place. He mounted me on a pony, and gave me what he called 'a dreadful nice little gun' to carry, in order that I might have a shot at the wild geese, which were very abundant there. He told me that the geese were a great nuisance to him. He paid 150 dollars every spring to men whose sole business was to frighten the geese away from his wheat, and he said that he always kept a gun and ammunition to lend anybody who wanted to shoot, on the sole condition that they did their shooting over his wheat-fields. He considered that the injury done by the geese was not confined to the amount of wheat they consumed, but that they poisoned whatever ground they resorted to. I succeeded in diminishing the number of these troublesome birds to the extent of one head.

The soil appeared to be rich, so far as I could judge, and the doctor seemed well satisfied with his prospects. When he learnt that my thoughts tended towards stock-raising, he said there was a capital country about seventy-five miles south of Nickerson, in the neighbourhood of Medicine Lodge, where cattle were able to live all the year round on the grass, without extra feeding. I made a mental note of this fact, for future use. In the evening the doctor introduced me to his wife, whom I found engaged in accompanying, on a harmonium, two girls who worked for her, and who were singing hymns of Moody and Sankey. At that period there was only one passenger train per diem each way, so I left that night at the same hour as I had arrived the night before, and went on West.

The country along the Atchison, Topeka, and Santa Fé Line does not appear so desolate as along the Kansas Pacific, because the railway follows the Arkansas River all the way from Hutchinson to Pueblo, and the monotony is somewhat relieved by the sight of the river and by a few trees occasionally scattered along its banks. At Pueblo I had to change on to the Denver and Rio Grande Line. This is a narrow-gauge railway, and runs along the foot-hills of the Rocky Mountains between Pueblo and Denver.

On my arrival at Denver I returned to some lodgings that I had formerly occupied in California Street, but I boarded at the Wentworth Hotel. There were several men from the Eastern States stopping there for the benefit of their health, and a few days after my arrival two or three of them, who had arranged to go and stay on a farm about seven miles from the town, invited me to join the party, which I was very willing to do, as I was getting tired of loafing about Denver. They made us very comfortable at the farm, though there was naturally not much occupation to be found. By way of exercise and amusement I used to employ my mornings in tramping over the country with a gun in search of 'jack rabbits.' A jack rabbit is, in fact, a hare, very similar in appearance and habits to our English hares, and why it is called a rabbit I am unable to say. They were tolerably plentiful, but difficult to get within shot of, so whenever I succeeded in bagging one I always felt proportionately elated. It was then towards the end of November, and we soon had a touch of winter. A heavy fall of snow occurred, and the thermometer fell to 14° below zero. In spite of the cold, however, the days were not at all unpleasant, being usually bright and calm. I found it easier to discover the jack rabbits after the snow fell, as I was able to track them, but it was harder than before to get within shot of them, as the crunching of the snow under one's feet could be heard in the still air for a considerable distance, and gave ample warning to the jack to change his quarters.

It being now about time for my money to arrive from Junction City, I left my friends at the farmhouse, and returned to Denver. I had still to wait several days before it actually did arrive, so that I finally reached a state of impecuniosity bordering on absolute beggary. I laid out almost my last coin in telegraphing to inquire what was the cause of delay, and received the welcome reply that the money was on the way; and the next day it arrived. I afterwards received a letter from the banker, in which he said he had forgotten to send it before.

I had so long to wait for the means of getting away from Denver that it gave me ample time to weigh the expediency of going on to California, and to make inquiries on the subject from one or two men that I accidentally met, who had come from that part of the world. The result was that I began to doubt the advisability of proceeding to the Pacific Coast, and I decided finally to try back and to inspect the fine grazing country in South Kansas of which the good doctor at Nickerson had told me.

In order to get there I went to Hutchinson, a station some miles east of Nickerson, from which a conveyance carried the mails and any passengers to Medicine Lodge. The distance between Hutchinson and Medicine Lodge is about seventy-five miles. I was the only passenger, fortunately, as the conveyance, commonly known as a 'buckboard,' was calculated to take only one besides the driver. The machine was drawn for the first stage by one wretched mule. When we were getting near its close we met a sheriff driving into Hutchinson, in company with the postmistress of Kingman, a little village on the road to Medicine Lodge. This lady had just been taken into custody for opening letters and stealing their contents; and the sheriff told my Jehu that when he reached Pretty Prairie, which was the name of the place where he stopped for dinner and to change horses (or mules), he was to turn round and go back to Hutchinson, as he would be required as a witness against the postmistress. I was consequently left to enjoy myself as best I could at Pretty Prairie, from Friday to Monday. An old woman kept the house, with three or four grown-up sons and a couple of daughters. I had to share a room at night with the other male population of the house, and during the day I wandered about or conversed with the women. The old woman told me that she had married an Englishman, and was surprised that my way of speaking was so different from his, as he used to call any word beginning with *h*, such as horse or house, 'orse or 'ouse.

On Monday I was able to proceed on my journey. After we had passed Kingman, which is about forty miles from Medicine Lodge, we were beyond any settlements, and saw only one house until we came in sight of the 'city.' Medicine Lodge is prettily situated on the Medicine River, in Barbour County (now spelt Barber), one of the southernmost counties in Kansas, being bounded on the south by the Indian Territory. Barber County since its first settlement has always been a great stock-raising country, on account of the grass there being chiefly 'buffalo grass,' which cures naturally on the ground, and affords nutritious feed during the winter. There are several kinds of grass fit for winter grazing in the stock-raising States and Territories. They are known as 'buffalo,' 'mesquite,' 'gramma,' &c. These grasses are too short to be used for hay, which has to be made from coarser grasses such as are usually found along the river bottoms. In some places these long coarse grasses seem to be gaining entire possession of the prairies, to the extinction of the winter grass, and wherever that occurs it becomes necessary to supply the stock with hay for four or five months in the year, which of course adds considerably to the expense account. Barber County, having always had a large majority of stock-raisers as opposed to ordinary farmers, has never had a 'herd law.' In most counties where the grain-raisers are the majority, they pass a herd law requiring all stock to be kept under herd or in pastures, to prevent them from injuring the crops. Where there is no herd law the farmers are obliged to fence in any of their land which they wish to preserve from the trespasses of cattle or sheep. The stock-raising regions *par excellence* are situated farther west than Barber County, and embrace a tract of country where farming in the ordinary sense is scarcely practicable, on account of the scarcity of rain, and where consequently there is little danger of clashing of interests between the stockman and the grain-raiser; but Barber County is situated on the border between the farming and grazing districts, and there have been in it many unsuccessful attempts to pass a herd law. The line at which ordinary farming begins to pay is said to be gradually moving West, which means, I suppose, that the gradual extension of cultivation brings with it an increased rainfall; and certainly farming is now successfully carried on in many parts of Kansas which not many years ago were considered much too dry for anything but grazing.

Medicine Lodge consisted of some fifteen or twenty houses when I first 'struck' it. There was one hotel, rejoicing in the name of Hôtel de Updegraff, Updegraff being the name of the proprietor. The accommodation was somewhat rude. The sleeping apartment consisted of a dormitory containing about eight beds, and if you had a whole bed to yourself you might count yourself fortunate. I was intending to try and get a horse in order to ride out and visit one or two ranches of which I had heard in the neighbourhood; but, a spell of wet having set in about the second day after my arrival, I was sitting disconsolate at the stove in the hotel office, when a party of travellers arrived in a dripping condition, and sat down to warm themselves. I entered into conversation with one of the party, a comfortable-looking man of about forty. After the usual American fashion he inquired what business brought me to those parts. I told him that I came to look at the country, with a view to cattle-raising if it appeared eligible. He said that he had a very good opinion of that business, and that in fact he was prevented from going into it himself only by the lack of capital to make a start. He said he had a farm at Newton, on the Atchison, Topeka, and Santa Fé Railway, that he had just brought down a party of settlers who were intending to reside in Barber County, and was going back to his own farm the next day. He now proposed to me to go back with him to his house, and after I had made inquiries among his neighbours as to his character and so forth, we might arrange to return here in the spring, and start in the cattle business in partnership together, he supplying the experience and I the capital. I thought the matter over, and it seemed to me that, as I knew nothing at all about cattle, I might, by going into partnership for a short period with a farmer who had been accustomed to handle them all his life, acquire the experience that I needed at least as safely and cheaply as I should by hiring a man to help me, who would not have the same interest in bringing matters to a successful issue.

I therefore started back the next morning with my farmer friend, who had a spring waggon with him, and at the end of three days we reached his place, where he introduced me to his wife and two daughters, and where everything seemed very comfortable after my trip to the wilds of Barber County.

I was not long in making up my mind on the partnership business, and a few days afterwards we agreed to become partners for two years for the purpose of buying, selling, and handling stock, I supplying the capital, and both of us giving our time and attention to the business. At the end of the two years we were to balance our accounts, and, after deducting the expenses, the profits, if any, were to be equally divided between us. We had a regular deed of partnership drawn up by a lawyer, and duly signed, sealed, and delivered.

CHAPTER III.

THE winter of 1877–78 was mild and wet in Southern Kansas, more like the climate of England than of America. My partner's farm was about a mile and a half from Newton, a flourishing little town about seven years old. The farmers in the neighbourhood seemed to be prospering. There were some colonies of Germans, and, as is generally the case, they seemed to be among the most thriving of the settlers. Germans generally congregate together when they emigrate. In a Roman Catholic community it is not unusual for their priest to come over first and choose a suitable locality, and afterwards for his flock to follow his footsteps and cluster round him, as they did before in the old country. I was told that the first thing a German settler does is to build a good stable and a barn. Then, having provided good accommodation for the horses, the family live in the barn until they can afford to build a house. The American begins with the house, and is too often content to shelter his horses in a miserable apology for a shed, even when he has sufficiently prospered to be well able to afford a decent stable. It is a common saying that a German feeds his hogs with what he can't sell, and lives himself on what his hogs won't eat; and, though that is of course an exaggeration, there is no doubt he usually earns success by great thrift.

My partner had come to Kansas when it first began to be settled, and had acquired his land under the Homestead Act, which gives a man a title to 160 acres of land after he has lived on them for five years. If a man has selected a good spot and managed to keep free from debt during the five years, the value of the land on his acquiring the title gives him a nice little profit. Too often, however, the first use he makes of his title-deeds is to put a heavy mortgage on the land in order to buy new machinery for working it or to pay off debts already contracted. My partner had succeeded in making both ends meet without getting into debt, and would have liked to sell his farm and invest the produce in cattle, had not his wife objected; and in Kansas, and I believe all over the States, a man cannot sell his real estate without the consent of his better half.

My partner, on his trip to Medicine Lodge, had noticed a nice little stream of water in Kingman County, about twenty-five miles from the Lodge, where he thought we should be able to get a capital summer range for our cattle. We agreed to pick up any young cattle that the neighbouring farmers had to sell, and keep them at his farm until there was sufficient grass in the spring to enable us to drive them down to Kingman County. The first animal we bought was a young cow that my partner told me would very shortly have a calf, and he said he would be very willing to feed the cow for the value of the milk he should get over and above what the calf needed. I agreed to that, but as it turned out no calf put in an appearance; and, though this of course was a disappointment, it has always been balanced in my mind by the mean satisfaction I felt in coming over my American partner to the extent of feed for this cow during the winter.

For some time we gloated over our herd, as represented by that cow, without adding much to it, but as spring approached we bought a couple of ponies and used to go about to the neighbouring farms, picking up here and there a yearling or a two-year-old. The largest batch we got at one place amounted to about twenty-five yearlings, and their owner told us he had about one hundred of two-year-olds down in Barber County which he would like to sell to us. We accordingly made an excursion to see them, approved of them, and bought them, with the understanding that they were to be kept for us till we moved to Kingman County.

I became acquainted during the winter with a young man from Massachusetts, who was staying in Newton, with the intention of going into the cattle business, and we arranged that he should hold his cattle with ours when we moved to the range, and take his share of the expenses. Our cattle would have a different brand from his, so whenever a separation should become desirable he would simply have to cut out his cattle and proceed elsewhere. He also explored the country about Newton in search of cattle, and succeeded in getting together about one hundred head.

My partner had formerly been in the habit of earning an honest dollar by breaking the prairie by contract; that is, he would undertake to plough the land for a new settler at $2.50 (about ten shillings) per acre. The implements he used were two gang-ploughs, each of which ploughed two furrows and was drawn by three yoke of oxen. As it was not always easy to find lodgings for his men near their work, he had built a small wooden house, ten feet by six, which could be placed on ordinary waggon-wheels and drawn wherever it was required, and which would afford shelter to a couple of men. We thought this would be useful for ourselves to live in Kingman County, so we fitted a couple of bunks, one above the other, at one end, fastened a board flap by hinges, for a table, to one side, and nailed up an old box in one corner for a cupboard. We also bought a little oil-stove with which to cook, and with the addition of a frying-pan, kettle, some knives and forks, &c., our humble abode was furnished.

We then turned our attention to the victualling department, and laid in a supply of flour, ham, eggs, coffee, sugar, salt, baking-powder, molasses, and some dried fruits. These, with some blankets, clothes, &c., were stowed away, partly in the 'house' and partly in a spring-waggon that our Massachusetts friend contributed as his share of necessaries.

Towards the end of April the grass was quite good enough for driving cattle, and we started on our journey. The procession left the neighbourhood of Newton in the following order. First went the Massachusetts man, driving his waggon with a couple of ponies; then followed the herd driven by three hired lads and myself, all mounted on horseback, and my partner brought up the rear, standing in the doorway of the shanty, which was drawn by a yoke of oxen.

The distance we had to go was about eighty miles. We generally travelled from ten to fifteen miles in a day. In the evening we always camped early enough to let the cattle fill themselves up pretty well with grass before dark, so that they might be tolerably contented for the night. When it began to get dark we would bunch them all up close together and hold them till they lay down, and during the night we took it by turns to ride round and round the herd, turning back any animal that tried to stray out.

We found that the house was too heavy

for one yoke of oxen to draw comfortably, so my partner swopped a couple of our cows with a settler, whose place we passed, for another pair of oxen, which were put on as leaders. They proved to be not so well broken as those we had, and succeeded once in running away with the shanty. My partner managed, however, to stop them before they had done any damage beyond smashing some of our crockery, which had not been put away after breakfast sufficiently carefully to encounter such an unexpected earthquake. With the exception of one or two short thunder-storms we had fine weather, and arrived without further accident at our destination.

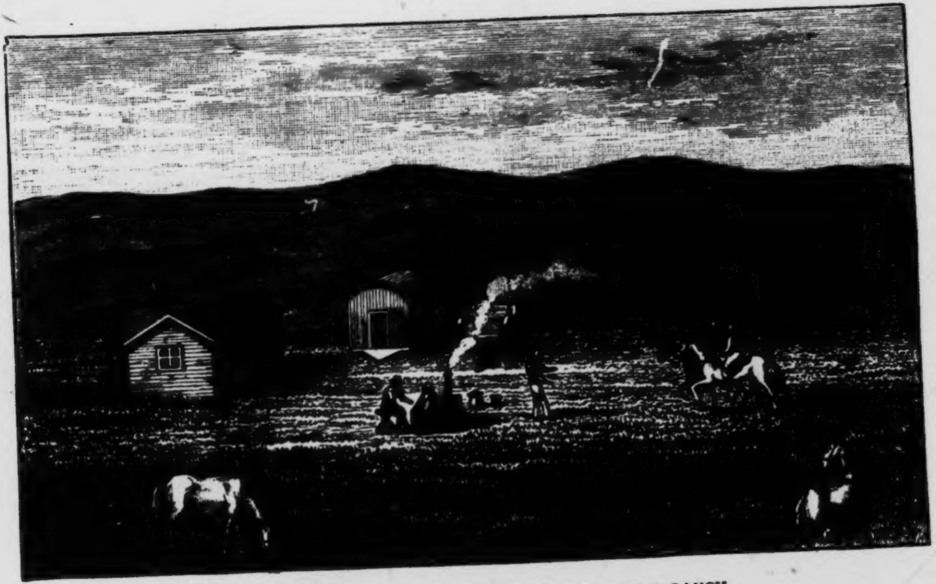
I was much pleased with its appearance, and gave my partner full credit for his selection. The old grass had all been burnt off in the winter by prairie fires, and the spring crop looked very fresh and green in our little valley and on the low hills on each side, and there was a small stream of clear water flowing down the centre of the valley, beside which we deposited the house after removing the wheels on which it had travelled. A few trees would have added to the beauty of the landscape, but were not to be found in those parts.

The boys celebrated our arrival by some pony races, and the next day my partner and I went to fetch the cattle we had bought in Barber County, and found them much improved in appearance. We started back, having obtained the assistance of another man to help to drive them, and towards evening, the cattle seeming tired and hungry, like ourselves, we left them at a little creek and rode forward to a house about a mile distant to get something to eat. We were absent about an hour. When we got back there was not a hoof to be seen. We hunted about, but it soon became so dark that there was nothing for it but to picket our horses and roll ourselves up in our blankets till morning. As soon as it was light we rose and resumed our search, and before long discovered our lost herd. Fortunately they had all remained together, and though they had, no doubt, set out with the intention of returning to their old range, they were so tired that they were glad to lie down when it grew dark and await the morning before resuming their march. We were then not many miles from our own camp, so we drove the cattle on till we arrived there, in time for a not very late breakfast.

My partner now went back to Newton with the waggon to bring some more supplies, and, as we had dismissed the boys who had helped us, 'Massachusetts' and I were left to take care of the cattle. The work was not at all severe. We got up generally about sunrise, and after a hasty breakfast saddled our horses and went round the cattle, counting them as we passed along. If any had wandered too far we drove them back. Then we returned, had some dinner, read, or wrote letters, or otherwise passed the time till four, when we rode out again and quietly worked the cattle towards home. After sundown we rounded them up close to the shanty, and held them there till they began to lie down, after which we went in, had supper, and 'turned in' pretty early. Sometimes a few of our cattle would stray away and give us some trouble to discover them. When this happened we usually found them in one of the neighbouring herds, of which there were three within a radius of five miles.

The oil-stove that we used for cooking was provided with a tin oven for baking purposes; but we found it impossible to bake bread with it, so had to substitute fried cakes made of flour and oatmeal. We used to eke out our fare with some small fish that we caught at the creek, and my comrade used occasionally to bring in some large frogs and give us a dish of fried frog legs, which are considered a great delicacy in many parts of the States. There were a good many antelopes in that neighbourhood, and later on I bought a Winchester repeating rifle with a view of getting some. I never had much success myself, but my partner, who was an old hand at the work, killed several during the summer, the meat of which we found a very pleasant addition to our bill of fare.

About the beginning of July we were joined by two young men from Pennsylvania, brothers, with one of whom my partner and I had made acquaintance at Medicine Lodge, at the time of our second trip to that place. They had been buying cattle, and wished to hold them with ours,



ARRIVAL OF VISITORS AND MANNER OF LIFE AT A RANCH.

and as they seemed to be good fellows, and there was plenty of grass and water for all, we were very glad to have them with us. They procured some boards, and built another house alongside of ours. It was a very rough piece of work, and could be knocked to pieces and carried away whenever we wanted to move. They also bought a little sheet-iron stove for cooking out of doors, which superseded the oil stove, the latter not being large enough for our augmented party. As there was no wood to be had we used dry cow-dung for fuel, a very tolerable substitute, and in our new stove we succeeded in baking bread. The implement which is almost universally used on the range for baking bread, when camping out, we did not possess at that time. It is called a Dutch oven, and consists of a flat-bottomed, cast-iron vessel, with a lid having a rim round it to prevent the pieces of burning fuel that are spread over the top from falling off. A little fuel is also placed under the oven. The dough is 'raised' either with baking-powder or by mixing it with some sour dough and adding a little soda.

In August I went back to my partner's farm for two or three weeks, chiefly on account of the good prairie-chicken-shooting to be had there. There were some of these birds to be found in Kingman County, but they always increase considerably in numbers where the land has been under cultivation for a time, as they are fond of grain, and the settlers destroy a good many hawks and other vermin that prey on them. They are apt to become scarce again, however, when the country comes thickly settled and sportsmen numerous.

The weather was very hot, and I could only shoot early in the morning or towards sundown. Americans generally go chicken-shooting in a waggon or buggy, and wait till the dogs make a point before alighting. This plan has some advantages in the hot weather, and enables you to carry some water for the dogs, who cannot work long without it. However, I am afraid the shooting party is generally more careful to provide something to drink for the bipeds than for the quadrupeds; and certainly a few bottles of lager beer packed in ice do add to the enjoyment of a shooting excursion in the hot days of early autumn. The chicken-shooting season now begins legally on September 1 in Kansas.

During this time I took a driving tour of a few days with a couple of friends through Marion and Dickinson Counties. We carried a few simple cooking utensils and blankets, and wherever we found a pleasant spot we used to halt and take a stroll with our guns in quest of prairie chickens.

The first day I met with a mishap, which happily did not turn out so serious as it might have done. One of my friends got out of the spring-waggon to shoot a plover; the other man was holding the reins, while I sat on the hind seat with a loaded gun on each side of me. The seat was not securely fastened down, and when the horses heard the shot they made a sudden plunge forward, and I went out backwards, seat, guns, and all. I lit on my back in the middle of the road, and no doubt presented a sufficiently ludicrous appearance, to judge from the mirth to which my friends freely gave way after they found that I had not injured myself.

After this excursion I returned to Kingman County, where everything was going on satisfactorily. The cattle remained very quiet during the hot weather, so that there was no necessity to go near them till we rounded them up for the night. About this time we took on another young man from Massachusetts, who added a few more cattle to the herd. Our herd now amounted to some six hundred head, and it was a pretty sight of an evening to see them streaming in from various quarters towards the bedding-ground. By this time they knew so well what was wanted that it was often sufficient just to start homewards a small bunch that might be grazing a mile off, and they would all go straight to the bedding-ground; and sometimes, if I happened to be late in going to fetch some from a distance, I would meet them strung out in a long line on their way to camp. It is never safe, however, to put too much dependence on the good intentions of cattle. Occasionally they take some queer freak into their heads, and when they have once made up their minds to do something you don't want them to know they are the most obstinate brutes in the world.

CHAPTER IV.

BUT we did not long enjoy this state of idleness. The first thing that disturbed us was the purchase of some Texas yearlings by the Pennsylvanians, from a herd eight or nine miles off. When they were brought in they made themselves very troublesome for a few days, by trying to get back to their old range, and we had to conquer about half a dozen of the worst by tying each of them to a cow by a short rope from the neck, so that it could graze about without difficulty, but could not leave the range without getting the consent of the cow, which she was not likely to grant. Then as the weather began to grow cool, and the grass to stop growing and to dry up, all the cattle became restless, and some of us had to be with them nearly all day, to prevent them from wandering away to long distances.

We never had any intention of remaining on this range during the winter, the grass being chiefly what is called 'blue stem,' which is quite unsuitable for winter grazing. But our departure was hastened by a prairie fire, which burnt up nearly all our range, and rendered a change to fresh pastures absolutely necessary.

My ideas respecting prairie fires, before going West, were gained chiefly from reading Mayne Reid's novels, and studying the illustrations, in which there were usually displayed Indians and white men on horseback, accompanied by a great variety of North American fauna, flying for their lives from the devouring element.

Prairie fires do annually a considerable amount of damage in the Western States, by burning a large amount of winter range, and when they get among the settlements they often destroy a good many stacks of hay, &c., which have not been properly protected by fireguards. The danger to life, however, in these days, is almost *nil.* These fires usually spring from carelessness. Some travellers encamp, and light a fire for cooking, and in the morning go off, leaving their fire still burning, instead of throwing a bucket of water or a few spadefuls of earth upon it. In the early morning, when they are leaving, it may be perfectly calm; but soon a breeze springs up, and the flame is carried into the neighbouring grass, and so a fire, which the smallest amount of trouble would have rendered impossible, is started, and may cause the loss of thousands of dollars before it has run its course. The speed with which it travels depends, of course, mainly on the strength of the wind. As it progresses it widens out till it may present a line of advancing fire of many miles in length. This line, however, is never straight. Little obstacles occur in the shape of pieces of bare sandy ground, of gullies, or of small streams, which hinder for a time the advance of the flames in some parts of the line; so that a traveller can usually manage to let the leading fire pass by him, and then, stepping on to the already burnt ground, he is safe from any further danger. If he has a waggon with him which cannot be moved rapidly, and the wind is strong, he may find it advisable to put a lighted match to the grass before the fire comes too near, and he will soon have a safe spot for his waggon and team. After the main body of fire has swept by, the grass is left burning on each side of the waste, caused by its passage, and, as long as the wind does not change, these side fires eat their way but slowly through the grass, and are easily stopped by any slight obstacles. A considerable extent of range may often be saved by beating out these side fires with wet sacks. This is a common experience among ranchmen in the West. I have never passed a winter in those parts without having more or less of 'fighting fire' to do. Where the grass is long, the heat and smoke make the work very exhausting, but in short grass the fire can be extinguished with comparative ease and rapidity, and often a good deal of it goes out of itself when the nights are at all damp.

We decided to take the cattle about fifteen miles south, to Harper County, which lies just to the east of Barber County. The fire had destroyed almost all the grass on our old range, except that which was close round our camp, where it had been too short to burn, and a few small patches here and there. We passed near some neighbours, who held a herd about three miles south of us, on the Chicaskia, and found that they had also lost most of their range, and were preparing to move to their usual winter quarters in Barber County.

When we reached our destination, we deposited our shanty by the side of the stream. The grass was pretty good, but there was not much in the way of shelter for the cattle during the winter. A good many wild ducks were to be found along the creek, several of which we brought to bag when we found time for a little shooting.

After we had been there a few days a prairie fire passed pretty near us, and left the grass on fire in dangerous proximity to our range, so that for some nights—we had no leisure during the day, as the cattle were inclined to stray—we used to work at beating it out. There was, of course, no difficulty in finding our way to the fire, but coming back to camp was a different matter, in a strange country, with hardly anything in the way of landmarks. We generally solved the problem by trusting to our horses, who never failed to take a pretty straight line home.

One morning we perceived the smoke of a fire on the hills to windward of us, in the opposite direction to that which we had been beating out. For some time we tried to believe that it was too far off to hurt us, but finally I rode out in the direction of the smoke, to get a better idea of its position, and found it was then not two miles off, and bearing directly down on us.

I galloped back, and we put the cattle over on the far side of the creek, which was wide enough to prevent the fire from sweeping right across, though it was sure to go round the head of it, being only a short stream. The flames were soon visible on the crest of the hill, and, as this fire took most of the grass on our range, we had to make up our minds once more to hunt for winter quarters.

At this time our party consisted of four, my partner and one of the Massachusetts men having gone up to Newton after some horses and supplies. Two of the party started the morning after the fire to Barber County to look for a fresh range, leaving myself and another man to take care of the cattle. About the third day after their departure the reconnoitring division returned with the news that they had been successful, and the same afternoon we pulled out, one man driving a waggon containing our personal property, and the shanty being abandoned for the present.

On our way to the new range we stopped at the place of a man who had a large branding-pen, of which he allowed the use for a consideration. We had to brand our calves, and also a good many of the old stock which had not been properly branded at first. The large cattle were put into the corral, and then driven, a few at a time, into a 'shoot,' or narrow way capable of holding fifteen or twenty head, one behind the other, into which they are crowded as closely as possible, to prevent them from being able to struggle much when the hot iron touches them. The calves were simply thrown down and held by a couple of men while a third branded them. As soon as a shootful of cattle was branded they were turned out and herded outside the pen.

As we could not get through the work in one day, towards evening we turned out the cattle that were still unbranded, grazed them till it was almost dark, and then night-herded them, putting the branded cattle back in the pen, so as not to get them mixed. Being short-handed we had to divide the night into just two watches of two men each.

Mine began at 1 A.M., and, soon after I and my comrade turned out, a cold soaking rain set in which lasted all the rest of the night, and in fact nearly all the following day, so that we could do no branding.

The cattle were very quiet for about two hours after our watch began, and then something frightened them. They were all on their feet in an instant, with a noise like a clap of thunder, and started to run. We were able to stop them, however, without difficulty, and no harm was done except that one of the calves was run over and its leg broken.

Such a panic is not usual with cattle like these, consisting for the most part of domestic cows, but it is common enough with those that have been running wild on the range. A herd of steers is especially liable to 'stampede' at night, often from the merest trifle, such as the horse of the herder snorting or stumbling, or even without any apparent cause. When on night-herd the men usually keep singing all the time as they ride round, that the cattle may know what is going on and not be suddenly startled by the sound or sight of a passing horseman. It is astonishing how instantaneously a whole herd are on their feet when they get a scare; and when once a herd of beeves starts to run it is no such easy matter to stop them. The only way is to gallop along beside the leaders, and gradually swing them round into the tail of the herd, when they will usually fall into following each other round and round in a circle, or 'milling,' as it is commonly termed, until they are tired of the exercise and quiet down. Not unfrequently, however, especially if the night is dark, a large number will succeed in getting clear away, in which case they may run for miles before stopping.

Very glad we were to see daylight appearing, though the weather did not mend, and my assistant herder, who happened to be a boy we had casually picked up to help us, was so disgusted with the state of affairs that he told us after breakfast he must go home, and resolutely declined to have anything more to do with the cattle business. This was the more unpleasant as one of our party was already *hors de combat* from an attack of colic. However, that evening we were rejoiced to see a waggon arrive with my partner and his companion from Newton. They also brought with them another Pennsylvanian, who had come to join the two brothers from that State, and a young man named Frank V——, whom my partner afterwards engaged to take his place during the winter. The following day we finished our branding, and the next morning proceeded on our route.

The place selected for our new range was on the Medicine River, about seven miles above Medicine Lodge. The country there is rather rough and broken, but with a fair amount of timber along the river. We pitched our camp on a little stream called Red Creek, which runs into the Medicine. We now turned our cattle loose for the winter; that is to say, we no longer herded them nor rounded them up at night. We simply rode round the range about twice a day, and turned back anything that was straying beyond what we considered to be the limits. In order to make this line-riding, as it is called, easier, we divided our forces, the two Massachusetts men going to live three or four miles farther up the river, and arranging to ride the west side of the range, while the rest of us took care of the south and east lines, and a man who had some cattle on the same range, and lived six or seven miles north of us, undertook to look after the north end.

In this way of holding cattle they generally contrive to get pretty well scattered during the winter, so that it often happens, when spring comes, that not half of them are to be found on their own range; and it is for the recovery of the strayed cattle that the institution known as 'round-ups' has come into existence. About them I shall have something to say later on.

The object of this system of 'range herding,' as it is called, is to save the cattle as much as possible from being driven about or interfered with. During the winter they always lose flesh and are more or less weakened, and any attempt at close herding would certainly cause the loss of a good many that would otherwise have managed to pull through.

It was now necessary to build some kind of house, as the shanties we had hitherto used would afford but poor protection against the keen blasts of winter. The choice lay between a log-house and a 'dug-out'; and as it would be difficult to get straight logs enough for the former, and it would take longer to build, and the weather was already getting cold enough to make living out of doors not very enjoyable, we decided to make a dug-out.

A dug-out is constructed by digging into a hill, which forms the back and sides of the dwelling. The front is made of logs, and the roof of sticks, on which grass or hay is laid, covered by a thick layer of earth. A fireplace and flue are dug out at one side, and a chimney is carried above the roof by means of some stones or sticks plastered with mud. It is a primitive kind of house, and I should think would not answer except in a dry climate. Ours was not at all uncomfortable, and with a blazing log fire on the hearth we knew little what the weather was like outside. As there was no spring at hand, we had to depend on the creek for water; and this containing gypsum in solution, like many of the streams in that part of Kansas, had the effect of medicine on our systems. We used it all the winter, however, without seeming to be the worse for it.

My partner brought the old shanty, with the aid of a man and team, from the place where we had left it, and we used it for a granary. We also built a shed for the horses. We should have been very glad of some hay, but it was too late to make any, so we had to depend on grass and corn for their food, and as they were not worked very hard they came through in fair condition.

CHAPTER V.

DURING most of the house-building time I was absent, having gone to Newton to fetch a supply of winter clothing. Winter began to show its teeth before I returned. I had been driving all one afternoon over a prairie road which seemed interminable. I intended to stop at a house about ten miles from Red Creek, but as the sun went down before it was in sight, and the ponies were tired, I resolved to stop and camp for the night; so I unharnessed the ponies, gave them a feed of corn, and tied them to the waggon. I took a bite of something and a sip of whisky, and rolled myself up in my buffalo-robe for the night. It was fine when I lay down, but when I awoke in the morning it was snowing fast. Thoughts of the possibility of being lost in the snow, if the trail I was following should be covered, quickened my movements, and I harnessed the ponies as fast as my cold fingers would allow, threw my buffalo-robe on the top of the things in the waggon, and started off. Before I had gone very far I found the buffalo-robe had been blown away, but I did not stop until I arrived at the house four miles farther on. Afterwards, when it had cleared up, I went back in search of my robe, but without success, and as I saw fresh tracks of a waggon in the snow I concluded some one had picked it up. There was really no danger of getting lost in this little snowstorm, but travellers do sometimes come to grief in crossing those great treeless prairies in the winter. The thermometer rarely falls very much below zero, but the cold is rendered very severe on account of the wind that sweeps across the plains. Changes of weather are very sudden too. One day you may be glad to go about in shirt sleeves, and the next it is so cold that you cannot put on enough clothing to keep yourself warm. It is therefore necessary to go prepared with plenty of warm clothing on a journey of any length in the winter, however genial the weather may be at the hour of starting. Many a poor fellow caught in 'a cold snap' has had his feet frozen so badly that he has been obliged to lose one or both in order to save his life. Others have not escaped even in that crippled condition.

The following story I cannot absolutely vouch for, but I heard it from a particular friend of the hero, and am myself fully disposed to believe it. At all events it has a good moral; so I present it for the benefit of temperance lecturers with my compliments, and they can make use of it without expressing any doubts about its veracity, which are probably only the result of my naturally sceptical disposition. Some ten or fifteen years ago, when Kansas was the home of the bison, a young man from one of the Eastern States went to Witchita, and set out from there on a buffalo hunt with a party of hunters. There were seven of them altogether, and they took with them a supply of provisions and a keg of whisky. Soon after they started it became very cold: one of those piercing 'northers' began to blow which seem able to strike through any amount of clothing. Night was coming on, and the whole party rolled themselves up in their blankets or buffalo-robes to sleep, the hunters all helping themselves freely to the whisky before lying down, while the stranger declined to take any. In the morning when the latter awoke he found that every one of his companions was frozen to death. The tough old hunters had succumbed to the cold, while he, unused as he was to hardship and exposure, though almost frozen himself, was still alive. He managed with the greatest difficulty to crawl away from the fatal spot, and fortunately soon fell in with some travellers who took care of him and conveyed him back to Wichita. My narrator told me that his friend was still living, but that he never fully recovered his health after that terrible experience.

On arriving at Red Creek I found the 'dug-out' just finished. It was now November. After that first snowstorm the weather again became warm, but towards the middle of December winter really set in. We had about six weeks of frost and snow, and the ice on the river was so thick that we could cross it on horseback. During this time we did not do much 'line-riding.' Cattle will not usually cross a frozen river, so there was not much danger of their drifting southwards.

About half a mile from us there was a little post-office called Red Creek Post Office, *à propos* of which I will mention an instance of the cleverness of the United States Post Office authorities in guessing epistolary conundrums. I wrote to a lady in England, dating my letter from Red Creek, Barber County, Kansas. A few weeks afterwards I got a reply, addressed to me at Red Couts, Barton and Co., Kansas. As there happens to be a Barton Co. in Kansas, it was all the more wonderful that the post-office people were not put on the wrong scent.

When Christmas came we succeeded in obtaining a turkey from a neighbouring settler. As we had no means of roasting or baking a bird of that size, the postmistress agreed to cook it for us, and I well remember Christmas Day, watching the arrival of two of our party riding side by side, and bearing the turkey carefully between them in a large tin pan, covered over with a cloth. As they neared the house the horses became restive and wanted to go in opposite directions, and a few moments of fearful suspense ensued. But, to the great relief of the anxious spectators, one of the men managed to catch hold of both sides of the pan while the other let go his hold, so that the precious freight was saved from peril, and eventually landed triumphantly on the table.

There were a good many settlers along the river who used to do a little farming, and had in general a few cows of their own. During the winter we had occasional dances at their houses. The fair sex were always a good deal outnumbered by the rougher portion of humanity, sc that no 'wall-flowers' were allowed among the ladies. There were no regulations as to costume, and the gentlemen commonly wore their trousers tucked into the tops of their boots, big Mexican spurs, and occasionally broad-brimmed hats and navy revolvers. A fiddle—on grand occasions two—supplied the music; while during the cotillons the M.C., who was usually one of the fiddlers, called out the figures in sonorous tones: 'balance all—swing your partners—grand right and left,' &c. &c. The dancing, if not graceful, was usually very vigorous, and after it was over we used to mount our ponies, which were in general tied to the fence outside the house, and gallop home over the snow as hard as we could tear.

We all lost a few cattle in the early winter from a disease called 'black-leg.' I cannot give its diagnosis, but it seems most fatal to calves and yearlings. When the skin is removed after death there is generally a dark appearance in some part, most frequently, I think, the shoulder, as if there had been a stagnation of the blood. It generally proved fatal in less than twenty-four hours. We scarcely ever discovered an animal seized with it until after death. The cause and proper treatment both seem rather obscure. Some persons have great faith in making the animal run for as long as he can when he first shows symptoms of the disease.

We had a very early spring that year, and the grass made quite a start in March, but, the weather continuing very dry, it did not grow much. The early spring is usually the most critical season with cattle. The first effect of the young green grass seems to be to weaken them, and as the days grow warmer an annoying insect called the 'heel-fly' makes its appearance. The cattle are in great dread of this pest, and the instant an animal feels one it hoists its tail in the air and takes a bee-line for the nearest water. Now a good many of the streams and water-holes in that part of the country have very miry bottoms, so that a cow plunging violently in is very apt to stick there, and, unless assisted out, will certainly perish. Often more cattle are lost in that way than from all other causes, and it is advisable during the spring, and especially during the heel-fly season, which fortunately does not generally last longer than about three weeks, to ride along the dangerous places in a range every day. When a cow is discovered mired down, two or three men throw their 'lariats' over her horns (if she has none, then over her neck), and taking two or three turns with the rope round the horns of their saddles drag her out on *terra firma*. If she has not been in very long she generally goes off all right, but if she has been in a sufficient time to become thoroughly chilled she will probably die. Sometimes her legs are so benumbed that she has to be assisted up before she can stand, and when this happens frequently the first thing which she does when she finds herself on her feet is to put down her head and charge her deliverers. But in her weakened condition it is easy enough to get out of her way, and she either falls down in her fruitless efforts or soon abandons the chase.

Prairie fires did not trouble us much on this range. The ground being so rough and broken, and the grass short, a fire would not easily spread. One of our neighbours, an old man living about two miles east of us, did his best to burn us out in February or March. He purposely set fire to the grass, as he said, to burn off a patch to make a place for a few head of cattle of his to graze. The prairie is often fired just as the new grass has made a good start in order to burn off the old grass, the cattle preferring to feed on the young and tender blades, unmixed with last year's growth; but it was much too early in the season to do this, and our neighbour had not taken the slightest precaution to prevent the fire from spreading all over the range. Fortunately a neighbouring cattle-man caught him in the act, and galloped over to us to give warning. We sallied forth with sacks, &c., and, there being no wind, extinguished the fire without difficulty. Afterwards we rode in a body to the old man's house, and the gentle reader would no doubt like to hear how we threw our lariats on him, and dragged him to the nearest tree, there suspending him by the neck as a warning to all future prairie-burners. Nothing so interesting, however, really occurred.

When we arrived at the house we found that the old man had made himself scarce. His wife was there, and we left word with her that if he did not 'skip the country' within three days we should prosecute him with the utmost rigour of the law. The result was that the old fellow went away for a few days, and then returned to his old quarters. We then had him arraigned before the nearest justice of the peace, when he pleaded guilty and was fined fifty dollars, the lowest fine allowed by the State laws for wilfully setting fire to the prairie. The J.P. then remitted forty-five dollars of the fine. We were naturally somewhat indignant at this result, and had strong doubts of the legality of the remission. However, we did not pursue the case further.

About this time my partner arrived, bringing a load of ,corn and provisions, and I soon afterwards learnt that he had expressed a willingness to sell out his interest in the concern, at what I considered a very moderate figure; and as I was now beginning to think that a partner without capital was an unnecessary luxury, I immediately offered the sum mentioned, and we dissolved partnership. My partner was desirous of being more at home with his family, which was his reason for withdrawing. We parted on very good terms, and whenever I had occasion to go to Newton I stayed at his house, he having let his farm and removed into the town, and I was always most hospitably entertained by himself and the other members of his family.

There had been about two hundred head of cattle in my brand turned loose at the beginning of winter. A good many of them were steers, which would be three years old in the coming summer, and therefore of the right age for beef. I now thought it might be a good plan to sell the whole herd and make a fresh start. The cattle were pretty well 'graded up,' as it is called. They had mostly descended from Texas cows, but these had been crossed with shorthorn bulls, so that the breed had been considerably improved. I proposed now to sell them, buy again Texas cows, which could be had at a comparatively cheap rate, but which, when crossed with a shorthorn bull, produce a very good calf, and one that will usually do better on the range than a more finely bred animal. I therefore agreed to sell my yearlings, two-year-olds, and cows to the Pennsylvanians, to be delivered after the spring round up; while I intended keeping the three-year-old steers till fat enough to send to market, and I hired Frank V—— to work for me, as I should need some help.

About the middle of April the grass had come on sufficiently to begin the round ups.

This part of the country is drained by a number of rivers which all flow, roughly speaking, in a south-easterly direction. Between the rivers are 'divides'—that is, tracts of land more or less elevated, and from them small streams or 'creeks' run down, at various distances from each other, to the rivers. Let us suppose that we are going to round up a certain section of country. Some point is fixed on the river that runs through that section, at which to commence work. Every one likely to have any cattle in that neighbourhood sends one or more representatives, according to the number he expects to find. The smaller owners club together and fit out a waggon with provisions, so that there may be with one waggon six or eight men representing as many different brands. The big men, who expect to find perhaps one thousand head, send a waggon of their own, with five or six riders. We will suppose the meeting-point to be about thirty miles from our camp. About two days before the time fixed for beginning work we load a waggon with provisions, according to the number of men who go with it, and the probable time of their absence. Each man puts in his own roll of blankets. A driver is provided, who has also to act as cook. Each of the riders is provided with several horses, the usual allowance being about five to a man. A horse herder is generally taken, whose sole duty is to look after the loose horses. When we are ready we make our start, driving the loose horses before us. In the middle of the day we camp for dinner, and probably wish to change our horses. To effect this a couple of ropes are stretched from the wheels of the waggon, a man holding the end of each, so as to form an angle into which the horses are driven. The men stand behind the horses to prevent them from getting out at the open side of the triangle, each armed with a lariat, which he throws over the head of the particular animal he wishes to ride, and pulls him out of the herd. When every one has caught his horse, the remainder are turned loose again to graze, until it is time to go on. At night we camp beside a stream, if we can find one, and in order to prevent the horses from straying we round them up again and hobble them, by tying a short rope to the forelegs of each. A couple of horses are picketed out, with which to get up the others in the morning.

The following morning, at daybreak, the cook is up and gets breakfast for us, while two of the men go to hunt up the horses, unhobble them, and drive them back to the waggon. After breakfast the waggon is reloaded with the bedding and cooking utensils, and we proceed on our journey. On reaching our destination that evening we see waggons dotted about in every spot convenient for camping; while hundreds of horses are grazing about in herds averaging, perhaps, fifty or sixty head. The men are for the most part lounging round their camp-fires, discussing cattle, bragging of the speed of their horses, or describing the various brands of which they are in search.

The next morning we are early astir. The 'boss' of the range we are on comes along and tells us what he wants us to do. We are to work perhaps two creeks that morning. A party is sent up to the head of each creek to drive the cattle down to the mouth, while a third rounds up the cattle along the river. Our party is split up so that two or three may be present at each round up, and as the men with our waggon are all well acquainted with each other's brands we arrange to cut any cattle belonging to any of our party wherever we may find them. The detachments that are to work the creeks extend themselves on the way up, and throw on to the creeks all the cattle grazing in their neighbourhood. When we get to the head water of our creek, which may be about five miles long, we bring in any cattle we can find on the divide, and then our whole party ride down pushing all the cattle before them nearly to the river; and wherever we find a convenient level, we round them up, the men posting themselves round the herd, which contains perhaps seven or eight hundred head, to prevent them from breaking away. Then the work of cutting out begins. The boss of the range has appointed two of his men to help to hold the herd, and also to prevent everybody from rushing in, as soon as the cattle are rounded up, and 'ginning them around,' as he would call it, so that no one can work properly, and the calves all get separated from their mothers, making it impossible to tell to whom they belong. As soon as the cattle have quieted down, the word is given that one man from each outfit may go in and cut out. One of our party goes in, and whenever he sees an animal bearing one of our brands he runs it out, continuing until we have collected a little bunch of cattle, which a second man herds, to prevent them straying off and mixing with the other 'cuts.' When we have got out all our cattle we drive them off towards our waggon. In the meantime two other round-ups have been proceeding, and our 'cuts' from them are brought along and all thrown together, forming the nucleus of what we call our 'day-herd.'

This 'cutting' cattle is one of the pleasantest operations connected with the ranch business, if there is not too much of it at once. If there are so many to cut that your horse gets fagged, it is no longer pleasant, but quite the reverse. Moreover, the enjoyment depends entirely upon having an animal that understands what he has to do. There is a great difference among horses in learning this work. Some pick it up very readily; others seem never to understand it with any amount of teaching. A horse that knows what is wanted goes quietly through the herd while you are looking for your brand; then, when you have singled out your animal and urged her on gently to the edge of the herd, he perceives at once which is the one to be ejected. When you have got her close to the edge you make a little rush behind her and she runs out; but as likely as not, as soon as she finds herself outside the herd she tries to get back again, and makes a sudden wheel to the left to get past you. Instantly your horse turns to the left, and runs along between her and the herd so that she cannot get in. Then she tries to dodge in behind you. The moment she turns, your horse stops and wheels round again, always keeping between the cow and the herd, till she gives it up and runs out to the cut where you want her. A good cutting horse will do all this with the reins lying loose on his neck.

But it is time to get our dinner. When that is over, we tell the cook to take the waggon on up the river about six miles, and there camp. Two of our party are told off to follow with the day-herd, and the rest of us attend a couple more round-ups that take place in the afternoon. That night we picket out a horse apiece, as we have to herd our cattle. The leader of the party divides the night into so many reliefs, and tells each man at what hour he has to go 'on herd.' The next day we work on up the river in the same way, and so on *de die in diem* till we have rounded up all the cattle in that section of the country.

If our day-herd becomes unwieldy in size we despatch it to the range with a couple of men, and commence a fresh herd. Notwithstanding all our care, some cattle are sure to be left behind. A certain number have probably escaped being rounded up. A few we have accidentally missed, even when they were in the round-up, and some calves were not to be found, so that we have left the cows behind to hunt them up. In a few weeks, therefore, we shall work over the same ground again, and then we shall get nearly everything that we left behind on the first occasion.

When I first went out, fenced ranges were almost unknown in Kansas and the Indian Territory; now, however, the ranges in the 'territory' are nearly all fenced, and a good many also in West Kansas and the Texas Panhandle, so that round-ups will probably, before many years have passed, be known only by tradition in those parts, excepting such as are made by individuals on their own ranges.

CHAPTER VI.

THE description of round-ups which I have given in the last chapter is somewhat anticipatory. At the time when I first began to attend them they were managed by no means so systematically. At that time a number of men simply packed their blankets on one of their horses, and trusted for their meals to the various cow-camps which might come in their way. In those days it was a busy time for the cook at a ranch when the round-up party arrived. A hundred or a hundred and fifty men would very likely drop into dinner, supper, and breakfast, while working the range belonging to his employer. There are many men, mostly rather young ones, who think rounding-up great fun, and would not on any account miss an expedition of the kind. One man who had a little herd of domestic cattle not far from Medicine Lodge told me that his cattle were left in charge of a young man, who found in the spring that there was not a hoof missing from the range. He was not to be done out of his amusement, however, so he engaged a greenhorn to look after the herd, while he went off and attended the round-ups that were going on in the Indian Territory. Naturally he did not find anything, but when he got back, after an absence of two or three weeks, he discovered that about half the herd was now actually missing, owing to the carelessness of the man he left to look after them.

In fine weather the work of rounding-up is not at all unpleasant, but during a wet spell it is far from enjoyable; and in the spring there is often a tremendous amount of wind, which, accompanied by the sand and dust that the cattle stir up, has a very irritating effect on the eyes.

After our range had been rounded-up, I counted out the cattle I had sold to the Pennsylvanians, and sent Frank and another man, whom I had temporarily hired, with the three-year-olds, to hold them on any suitable range they might find east of Medicine Lodge, while I attended the round-ups on the borders of the Indian Territory, where I expected to find some cattle. I got only two or three head, and threw them into a herd which was going in the direction of the place where I heard that Frank was camped; and as it actually passed within sight of my old shanty, I had no difficulty in finding my way there.

I found that Frank had picked up several more of my cattle on the Medicine, below the Lodge. I forget how many I lost without being able to account for them, but I think it was about ten head, which was more than I ought to have lost, and partly owing, I think, to the fact that some of them were very poorly branded. Not liking our present range very much, we moved to a creek called 'Big Sandy,' in Harper County. The cattle were so well acquainted with my movable shanty that they felt quite at home near it. They had a very annoying habit of getting up early in the morning, just as one was enjoying his final and sweetest nap, and rubbing their foreheads against the corners of the house, every now and then bringing their horns with a bang against the sides. When we moved down on Big Sandy we had to wait for two or three days before we could get a man to haul down the shanty, so we bedded the cattle on the opposite side of the creek to that on which we intended to station the house, in order that they might get into the habit of sleeping a little way off from it; but the very first night after it arrived they all with one consent moved across the creek and bedded themselves close beside it.

Frank and I stayed with this little bunch of cattle till the middle of June. We had a very easy time, the only thing that broke the monotony being that all my horses left one night, except one that was picketed. As a general rule they never strayed farther than about two miles, but one night a Missouri mare that I had bought that spring took it into her head that she would like to revisit her native State, and started off leading the others. Mares being particularly liable to these freaks are much less valued than geldings for use on the range. We managed to borrow a pony which Frank used for herding the cattle, while I took the one horse left, and scoured the country. I went back to the winter range and hunted over it, and then tried all the neighbouring cow-camps, without success. Finally, some ten days after they were gone, on making a second visit to a little town called Anthony, sixteen miles east of us, I learnt that a farmer about ten miles farther east had taken up some stray horses, and on repairing thither I found the missing lot. He told me he had seen them quietly jogging along the road in an easterly direction, and, having a little pasture fenced in, he turned them in there.

While I am on the subject of horses, I will say a few words about the kind of animals we have in those parts. They are for the most part bred in Texas, and are exactly suited to the work required of them. They are generally small, but remarkably tough.

A man does not think anything of catching up one from grass and riding him forty or fifty miles in a day. They are never given any corn during the summer, and, if at the beginning of winter they are turned loose in fair condition, they will hold their own on the grass, and fatten up very fast as soon as the green grass comes in the spring. Those that are used in the winter require some grain. Notwithstanding their small size, they are up to considerable weight. The Mexican saddle in general use weighs from thirty to forty pounds, and on top of that you may sometimes see a man of fourteen or fifteen stone. In point of temper they vary considerably. Some are as docile as could be wished, while a good many are addicted to 'bucking.' When a horse bucks he puts his head down between his legs, arches his back like an angry cat, and springs into the air with all his legs at once, coming down again with a frightful jar, and he sometimes keeps on repeating the performance until he is completely worn out with the exertion. The rider is apt to feel rather worn out too by that time, if he has kept his seat, which is not a very easy matter, especially if the horse is a really scientific bucker, and puts a kind of side action into every jump. The double girth commonly attached to these Mexican saddles is useful for keeping the saddle in its place during one of those bouts, but there is no doubt that they frequently make a horse buck who would not do so with a single girth. With some animals you can never draw up the flank girth without setting them bucking. In California they use the same kind of saddle with a single broad girth, and you invariably find that any Californian who comes to live east of the Rockies still sticks to his single girth, and swears by it.

A really good Texas cow-pony, when

broken, is worth from 12*l.* to 20*l.* The common sort can be had at from 6*l.* to 10*l.* I have sometimes thought it might pay to pick out a choice lot and export them to England for polo ponies. They ought to answer admirably for that purpose, being so quick at turning, and having usually very good mouths. The expenses, however, would be considerable, so I do not advise any one to rush off and make the venture, without careful figuring beforehand.

Towards the middle of June a cattle-buyer came along who wanted to buy my cattle. I had intended to keep them until they were fat enough to sell for beef at the Kansas City market, but, as I was anxious to set about purchasing some more, I let them go. I found, after selling them, that my first year's work left me pretty much as I started, with regard to finances. In the meantime I had gained considerable experience, had paid out my partner, and was ready to make a fresh start, with good prospects of a more successful result in the future. It was commonly reported at this time that cattle could be had cheaply in the eastern part of the Indian Territory, and I settled to go to a place named Coffeyville, in the south-east of Kansas, and only a mile or two from the Territory line. From that point I might, if I did not find any cattle that suited me, make excursions into the Territory.

I got a lad named Fred to drive the waggon and cook for us. I also bought a pair of mules to drive in the waggon. The distance we had to travel was, I believe, somewhere about one hundred and eighty miles. Nothing of interest occurred during the trip, and we reached Coffeyville in about a week, having travelled along quietly. We camped at about half a mile from the town. There we found a man who had brought up a herd of cattle from the southern part of the Indian territory, consisting partly of three- and four-year-old steers, which he intended to take to Kansas City market, and partly of stock cattle, with which he was ready to deal. I bought his stock cattle, which consisted of cows and calves, yearlings of both sexes, and two-year-old heifers.

We cut out and counted the cattle on July 4, the anniversary of the Declaration of Independence, and a piping hot day. I found Frank very useful in classifying the cattle, as he had had considerable experience in buying and selling stock. It requires some practice to be able to tell with certainty the age of an animal, and where a seller finds that he can impose on a buyer he very often puts off the big yearlings as two-year-olds, and the big twos as threes. The age is usually judged from the appearance of the horns, though in case of dispute the animal is sometimes roped and his teeth examined. I afterwards got a few head from a man living in the territory about eighty miles off, making up the total number to about two hundred and ninety head.

As I was rather afraid of 'Texas fever,' if I drove my cattle west in the summer, I resolved to hold them down in the Indian Territory, a few miles south of Coffeyville, until cooler weather. Texas, or Spanish fever, as it is sometimes called, is a very curious disease. It usually originates with cattle that have come up from Southern Texas. There are annually driven up from that country many thousands of cattle, amounting often to one hundred and fifty or two hundred thousand head. These herds are the usual source of outbreaks of fever. They do not all, however, carry the fatal seeds of the disease. Generally, in the herds in which danger lurks, the cattle look thin and are footsore, and have evidently suffered from their long march. But the peculiarity about Texas fever is that the originators of it do not die from it nor even appear to be diseased. When, however, any of the 'graded' cattle, which are common in the Indian Territory and Kansas, come in contact with one of those fever-bearing herds, or even graze over the ground along which one has passed, it may be weeks previously, sickness and death are sure to follow. The better bred an animal is, the more liable is he to the disease. Texas cattle that have been wintered in Kansas sometimes show symptoms of disease after being exposed to the contagion of a herd from the south, but they usually soon recover, while in a herd graded up with shorthorn or other fine blood the mortality is often considerable. But an animal that has thus caught the disease cannot communicate it further. It never spreads beyond those that have received the contagion directly from the Texas herd. Consequently the fears sometimes expressed that Texas fever might be imported into England are perfectly groundless. The class of cattle that produce the disease are never worth exporting, and any that may have caught it from them are incapable of spreading it any further. Moreover, it is not at all likely that this fever could exist in England. In the United States it is to be found only in certain latitudes, and as you go north it altogether disappears. The line at which it becomes extinct bends southwards as it stretches towards the Rocky Mountains, probably owing to the rising elevation of the land. Thus Colorado seems to be unacquainted with the disease, though it often appears in Kansas in the same latitude. A sharp frost, too, seems to destroy the germs of the fever, so that it is considered safe after that to cross the trail of herds from the south. Ranch owners in Kansas, the Indian Territory, or the northern parts of Texas, when they bring Southern Texas cattle to turn on to their ranges, usually hold them out by themselves until after frost has occurred, when they put them in amongst their other cattle without fear of the consequences.

The part of the Indian Territory that lies south of Coffeyville is partially cultivated. The settlers consist chiefly of negroes, with a few Indians and some white men who have married Indian squaws, thus acquiring a right to hold land in the Territory. The climate is not so healthy as farther west, there being a good deal of malaria prevalent. I had a pretty sharp attack of fever and ague while I was there, and was confined to bed for two or three days at an hotel in

Coffeyville. The doctor dosed me plentifully with quinine, and I was soon able to get about again, but it was some weeks before I fully regained my strength. After I was able to go back to the herd several of the cattle became sick, and a few died. The disease seemed of the nature of Texas fever, and attacked mostly the best-bred animals. I had three shorthorn bulls, and they all had the disease, but only one died. The remedies I tried were dosing them with salts and shoving a piece of fat bacon down their throats. The great majority of the herd consisted of unimproved Texas and Indian cattle, and these did not seem to be affected by the disease.

I determined now to start back west at once. Grass was not very good, and the cattle did not appear content, and, as they seemed to be inclined to die anyway, I thought there would be as little risk in driving them as in leaving them on their present range. Before leaving I took up a car-load of about twenty head of my oldest dry cows to Kansas City, and sold them. Kansas City is one of the principal markets for Western cattle. The business of selling the cattle is chiefly done through a small number of firms. You select one, and consign your cattle to them, and they receive them at the stock-yards and manage their sale; and after deducting the charges for freight, yardage, and hay, and two shillings per head for their own commission, hand you a cheque for the balance of the receipts. Being so close to the railway, it was very easy to get cattle to market. We cut them out one evening, drove them to the railway stock-yards, and penned them. The next morning they were loaded into the car, and we started about eight o'clock, arriving at Kansas City at two or three the next morning. The following day I started back to Coffeyville with the proceeds of the sale in my pocket in the shape of greenbacks. The cattle are usually sold at so much per hundred pounds live weight. My cows brought 2.20 dollars per hundred pounds, and upon putting them on the scales they were found to average 859 lbs. per head, which is a fair weight for Texas cows. At the present time the same class of cattle would bring a dollar per hundredweight more.

As soon as I got back to Coffeyville we made preparations to pull out. The trail we were to follow was most of the way along the borders of Kansas and the Indian Territory, but at one part it dips down considerably into the territory, passing through the middle of the Osage reservation. This dip was made in order to avoid some rough country along the border. Our party consisted of Frank V—— and a young brother of his, who had come out to see how he liked the life out West, Fred, and myself. We started about the beginning of September, and had delightful weather all the way, with no rain at all except for one little thunderstorm, which lasted less than half an hour.

The first part of the way we passed through more or less wooded country, and sometimes rather hilly. The Osage Indians, through whose reservation we had to pass, had rather a bad reputation for black-mailing any passing herd. At that time, before the railway lines to Caldwell and Hunnewell, in Southern Kansas, were constructed, some beef herds were driven every year from the western part of the Indian Territory to Coffeyville, whence they were sent on by rail to Kansas City. The Osage Indians usually turned out in force when a herd came by, and claimed a right to one or two beeves, which they shot down and divided among themselves; and the drovers, though generally well armed, thought it better to give what was asked than to provoke a contest. I hoped to slip through without having to sacrifice any of my herd, and succeeded, though they managed to steal a little travelling bag I had in the waggon, with a variety of odds and ends, letters, and so forth in it.

We got among the Osages some five or six days after we started, and when we stopped in the middle of the day to graze the cattle and get some dinner, two or three Indians came up and examined the things in the waggon, and one of them got into a quarrel with Frank—who was not very complimentary in his remarks to them—and proposed to him to take off his six-shooter and fight him with his fists, which Frank wisely declined to do, the Indian being a tall and muscular specimen of humanity. I was out with the cattle at the time, and when I came to the waggon to get some dinner they were on peaceable terms again. After dinner we resumed our march, and it was while Frank and I were ahead with the cattle that the aforementioned bag was filched, one of the Indians who had got up on the seat beside the driver reaching back and pitching it out to another, who made off with it. One of my boys saw the transaction, and tried to get the Indians to restore my property, but without success, and when I heard of it I was too anxious to get the cattle through safely to stop and bother about the bag. We soon came to a place where the trail ran between two fences, and an Indian went to the far end of this narrow way as soon as he saw us coming, in order to put some bars to stop us from passing through. Frank, who was riding ahead of the herd, reached him just as he was commencing operations, and told him he would shoot him if he put up a bar, whereupon the Indian gave him to understand that he was doing only what he was ordered, but that he preferred disobeying orders to being shot. We passed through then without further molestation, and camped that night on a hill on the outskirts of the settlement. A tall and ill-favoured Indian rode up and scrutinised us after we had camped, but hardly spoke, and went off about dusk. I felt very uneasy that night lest some of the Osages might come and stampede the cattle, or steal some of the horses; and we divided the night into two watches, and went on herd two at a time, instead of singly, as was our usual custom. I went on during the first half of the night, and very glad I was when the moon rose about eleven o'clock, and enabled us to see what we were about. The night passed off quietly after all, and I was tired enough, when relieved from herd, to sleep soundly till daybreak, in spite of my anxieties.

One is not ordinarily much troubled by insomnia when cattle-driving, but I had a bad nightmare one night, which was not imaginary, but came in the shape of a real cow. I had taken the first relief at night-herding, and when my time was up, and I had called the next man, I lay down near the herd and was soon unconscious of all around. While I was enjoying my peaceful slumber an old brute of a cow came grazing in my direction, and as soon as she saw the herder coming round to turn her in she started to run. When she came to where I was lying, she planted her foot on my chest, having scraped my lip with her hoof, and she then stepped on the leg of one of the boys, who was sleeping beside me, who awoke with a fearful yell, exclaiming that his leg was broken! For a few minutes I felt doubtful whether I was half killed or not, but finally came to the conclusion that I was not much damaged, and, my neighbour seeming also to perceive that his first rash statement respecting his leg was untenable, we soon resigned ourselves again to the arms of Morpheus.

We had no further trouble from the Osages, and soon left them far behind. The only other Indian settlement we passed was that of the small and harmless tribe of the Kaws, on the banks of the Arkansas River. The chief of the Kaws came and asked us for a beef, but, as we firmly but kindly declined to give him one, he changed his request into 'one dollar,' which he was promised, on condition that he helped to get the cattle across the river; and he exerted himself so well as to fully earn the promised reward.

The 'noble red man' never loses anything by neglecting to ask for it. One evening we camped close beside the place which a Pawnee Indian, travelling with his squaw and infant, or 'papoose,' had chosen to camp in for the night. The squaw was busy cooking some supper, and some of the cattle seemed to be deeply interested in the proceedings, as they collected in a semicircle round the Indians' camp to watch what was going on. The squaw seemed to object to this scrutiny, so she seized a blanket and began to whirl it violently round her head. Upon that the cattle ran off about fifty yards, and then turned round and came quietly back to resume their stare. The irate squaw went forth again with the blanket, with the same result as before, and this was repeated several times until the amusement of the scene began to pall upon me, and I got on my horse and drove the cattle away.

The head of the family was over at our waggon, in the meantime, begging for groceries or whatever occurred to him, and before we pulled out the next morning he came and asked for a beef, 'just one little beef for poor papoose.' My hard heart was not touched even by this appeal, however, and poor papoose had to go without his beef.

CHAPTER VII.

The Cherokee reservation, or the land allotted to the Cherokee tribe in the Indian Territory, lies along the northern borders of the Territory, and comprises some millions of acres. The actual number of the tribe amounts, I believe, to less than a thousand persons, and they occupy the north-east corner of the Territory. They are about the most civilised tribe of Indians in those parts, having mixed up considerably with the pale-faces in marriage. 'The Cherokee strip,' as it is called, contains some of the finest grazing land in that part of the country. A white man is not allowed to acquire land, or to farm in the Indian Territory, unless he marries an Indian squaw. Consequently the stockman alone has been able to utilise the vast areas of unoccupied land allotted by the United States Government to the redskins. It was curious to notice, when travelling along the imaginary line that divides Kansas from the Indian Territory, the houses and barns and fields of corn appearing always on our right, while on our left the prairies stretched away as far as one could see, unbroken by any sign of civilisation. But after crossing the Arkansas River farms become pretty scarce, even in Kansas.

When we arrived to the south of Caldwell, I thought it advisable to go and look for a suitable range for the cattle, so I left Frank in charge, and started off in a westerly direction. I did not wish to go back to Barber County, which was getting too thickly settled up to be a satisfactory grazing country, and hoped to find a place in the Cherokee strip. For some days I travelled about, stopping at the different cow-camps, and inquiring for a good range. Even in those days it was becoming difficult to find an unoccupied range, and, as the object of all the stockmen was to secure as much territory as possible for their own cattle, they always discouraged the idea of additions on the part of a new-comer, stating that the range was fully stocked up. At that time no man had any actual rights in the Cherokee strip beyond that of being first in the field; but there was a general feeling that it was not right to crowd on any one who had secured possession of a range, and an infringement of this unwritten law was likely to cause ill-feeling among the parties concerned. Still the first-comers were in the habit of claiming tracts of land that were vastly in excess of the actual requirements of their herds, and men who came in afterwards and curtailed the unreasonable claims of these pioneers, though they would at first certainly provoke a good deal of grumbling, were sure in the end of obtaining the moral support of the neighbouring cattlemen.

Ranges on the Cherokee strip are now held on a totally different footing. Formerly the Cherokees used to send representatives to collect taxes from the cattle-men, charging so much per head of stock, and letting the cattle-owners decide among themselves the question of ranges. Now, instead of taxing the cattle, they lease the land at the rate of about a penny per acre per annum. The men already holding cattle on the strip were given the preference of leasing the ranges they occupied, and they formed themselves into an association, and appointed a committee to divide the land among them, and to decide all disputes as to the boundaries of their respective ranges. Under the new *régime* every man knows exactly what range he is entitled to, and most have fenced in their ranges with barbed wire. No newcomer can now put cattle on the strip without buying out the rights of one of the leaseholders. Several other tribes in the Indian Territory have followed the lead of the Cherokees, and leased their lands to cattle-men.

It is uncertain how long this state of things will continue. The United States Government at present supports the Indians in the leasing of their land, and orders out of the Territory any one who attempts to evade payment; but there is no doubt that before a great many years have expired the popular clamour which is raised from time to time against reserving such a vast territory from being populated will prevail, and the Government will be compelled to throw open the greater part of the Indian Territory for settlement. The Indians can no longer support themselves on the game found in the Territory, but depend chiefly on the rations issued by Government, and for the most part will not attempt to farm; and the question asked is, Why should not the American people be allowed to utilise the land, which in some parts of the Territory is undoubtedly fertile, and which is regarded as a veritable garden of Eden in the imagination of numerous adventurers, merely because they are forbidden to enter and abide there? Military posts are scattered about in different parts of the Indian Territory for the purpose of keeping the Indians on their reservations. They are mostly garrisoned by coloured regiments, or, as they are called by the Indians, 'buffalo soldiers,' probably with reference to their dark colour and woolly heads.

There have been no outbreaks among

the Indians in the Territory since 1878. It was in the autumn of that year, when we were holding our cattle in Kingman County, that news was brought that the Northern Cherokees were on the war-path. The Northern Cheyenne tribe had been brought down from the Black Hills of Dakota, and placed in a reservation just south of the Cherokee strip. They complained that the climate of the Indian Territory did not agree with them, and that they were dying off in consequence, and finally, in the autumn of 1878, a party of them, numbering I believe from one hundred and fifty to two hundred souls, started out to return to the Black Hills. On the way they stole a good many horses, and took the scalps of any pale-faces that they could get without any particular risk to themselves. There was a good deal of excitement felt at Medicine Lodge when the news of this outbreak arrived, and I remember seeing a waggon laden with rifles and ammunition going past our camp, which the Medicine Lodgers had obtained the loan of from the State Government to use in protecting themselves from any attack. The Indians did not, however, pass very near that town, but took a more westerly route, and appeared within a few miles of Dodge City, Kansas.

Dodge City was then, and still is, a great market for the herds of cattle that are brought up from Texas. Great consternation was felt on the approach of the Indians. Herds of Texas cattle amounting to many thousands were grazing in the neighbourhood, and were turned loose by the herders, who fled to the town. In one instance the Indians actually attacked the cow-boys before they made good their retreat, and a running fire with six-shooters and rifles was kept up till they got near the town, without much loss on either side, except that a negro cook who was with the cow-boys, being in a waggon—while the rest were mounted—was captured and killed. In other cases amusing panics occurred, and cow-boys fled for dear life upon seeing a few horsemen in the distance, whom they would have found to be friends and allies if they had not been so hasty in their movements.

There was a military post at Dodge, and the soldiers, accompanied by a volunteer force of cow-boys, sallied forth to the place where the Indians had intrenched themselves. They kept, however, at a respectful distance from the enemy, and, though the cow-boys were themselves anxious to make an attack, the military officers refused to order one. So, after lingering about for a few hours, they came back to Dodge, and the next morning it was discovered that the Indians had pulled up stakes during the night and silently departed. The mismanagement and want of spirit shown in this affair came to the ears of the military authorities, and a court-martial for trial of the officers was ordered, the result of which was that the officer in command was dismissed the service, and most of the others reprimanded.

After the Cheyennes had escaped from the neighbourhood of Dodge, they went on into Colorado, killing any lonely settlers or cow-boys that they chanced upon, and they are said to have set fire at one place to a schoolhouse, and burnt it, together with the teacher and scholars who were in it. Finally, the soldiers sent after them overpowered them, and took most of them prisoners; but on their afterwards attempting to escape they were all shot down, with the exception of some half a dozen who were retaken, and subsequently put back in the reservation.

This I believe to be a fairly correct account of that little outbreak; but though I know several men who saw the Indians, and some who very narrowly escaped with their scalps, I have never seen any authentic record of the affair, and, as regards what took place after their departure from Dodge, I have never happened to meet any actual eye-witness.

One need hardly wonder, I think, that the average frontiersman holds the whole Indian race in hearty detestation, and reads with a smile of contempt the effusions of philanthropists in the Eastern States on the subject of 'the poor red man.' The frontiersman sees nothing romantic in the Indian. He regards him as a lazy, dirty, thieving beggar, who has no business at all on the face of the earth. That is no doubt rather hard on the original owners of the North American Continent, who can hardly be expected, after so many centuries of wild and unfettered existence, to overcome their hereditary instincts and settle down to earn an honest livelihood with the sweat of their brow; and, moreover, there may be sometimes an excuse for outbreaks such as I have been describing, in the want of consideration for real grievances occasionally shown by the Government, or in the misconduct of some of their agents, who are only caring to feather their own nests at the expense of the Indians. Nevertheless, the cold-blooded cruelty displayed by a tribe on the war-path is such that any sympathy one may have felt for the wrongs of the red man is apt to be swallowed up in horror and disgust at his brutality. That the Government considered that the Northern Cheyennes had real cause for complaint was shown by the fact that the remainder of the tribe was afterwards moved back to their old home in the Black Hills;

the refusal to allow that step having been the original cause that had provoked the outbreak.

It does not seem probable that the Indians quartered in the Territory will attempt any more raids like that of 1878. As I have stated, many tribes have leased their lands to cattle-men, which naturally causes a friendly intercourse between white and red men, and ought also to produce a real improvement in the condition of the Indians, by reason of the dollars they receive for the use of their land. The Apache Indians in New Mexico and Arizona are still likely to cause occasional trouble, having mountain fastnesses in old Mexico to which to retreat; but, with these exceptions, I think that Indian raids will very soon become in the United States a thing of the past.

After I had spent several days range-hunting, I accidentally heard that a man, whom I shall call M——, from the State of New York, who used to hold cattle in Barber County, and whom I had met once or twice, had moved into the Cherokee strip. I determined to go down and see him, and soon discovered his camp in a pleasant-looking spot, about twelve miles south of the Kansas line. He gave me a hearty welcome, and as it was getting late I spent the night there, and the next day rode over the range with his foreman, and, having expressed my good opinion of it, M—— invited me to throw in my cattle with his, as he had plenty of range for all our stock. This suited me exactly, as I liked the look of the country there, and M—— seemed to be a capital good fellow. I accordingly moved my cattle down to M——'s range, but held them separate from his till we had hastily constructed a small corral in which to brand them. After they were branded, we turned them loose for the winter, and built a log-hut to live in, as it was now November, and getting cold.

This range, which became my home for about two years, is situated on the Salt Fork of the Arkansas River. It is well watered, not only by the river and by what is called Sand Creek, but by numerous short spring creeks which never entirely freeze, even in the coldest weather. Besides, there is a long line of ponds stretching across the range, which in the spring and autumn afford the best duck-shooting that I have ever enjoyed. At one part of the range there is a large piece of marshy ground, and it was astonishing what myriads of ducks, geese, cranes, and occasional swans congregated there in the spring. When anything disturbed them they would rise up in clouds, and circle about with discordant cries that might be heard miles off, until they had convinced themselves that there was no immediate danger, when they gradually settled down again.

Another curious feature about this range consists in what is termed the Salt Plains. The Salt Plains form a desert, some seven or eight miles across in either direction, of perfectly level sand. This sand is not loose, but compact and firm over the greater part of the plains, though in some places, especially near the river which flows along one side, a horse sinks in considerably, and the ground sometimes trembles as you ride over it as if there were a morass underneath. In dry weather a thin white film, apparently consisting of salt, appears all over the surface of this desert, which has a decidedly trying effect on the eyes of any one crossing it. Curious optical effects are produced on these salt plains, anything seen at a little distance looking distorted, and small objects looming up in the oddest fashion. I have fancied when riding along the edge of the plains that I saw a little bunch of cattle out on them, and, on going to drive them in, have found only two or three sticks and perhaps a buffalo bone or so, none of them standing more than a few inches above the level of the plain. Another time, having become extremely sceptical as to any appearances looking like cattle, I mistook what was really a group of about fifteen head, some lying down and others on their legs, for trees, which I had supposed to be on the other side of the plains.

The Salt Fork of the Arkansas River, which flows past these plains, has a decidedly brackish flavour; but it is not so salt but that stock like it. Horses seem to me to prefer water that is slightly saline to that which is perfectly fresh. About fifty miles farther west are the salt plains of the

Cimarron, where there is such an abundant deposit of salt that men go and haul it away by the waggon-load to feed their stock.

The winter passed off quietly and pleasantly. We had the usual 'prairie fire,' which swept through the centre of the range and took about half our grass. We had then, however, such an extensive range, compared to the number of our cattle, that they did not suffer at all from scarcity of food. In fact, I never saw cattle pass through the winter so well as they did that year. The weather was for the most part mild and dry, with very little snow, and the cattle in general seemed to lose very little flesh. Now that the ranges in the Cherokee strip are fenced in and well stocked, the owners have become much more careful about prairie fires, and great pains are taken to have fireguards ploughed and burned before winter sets in.

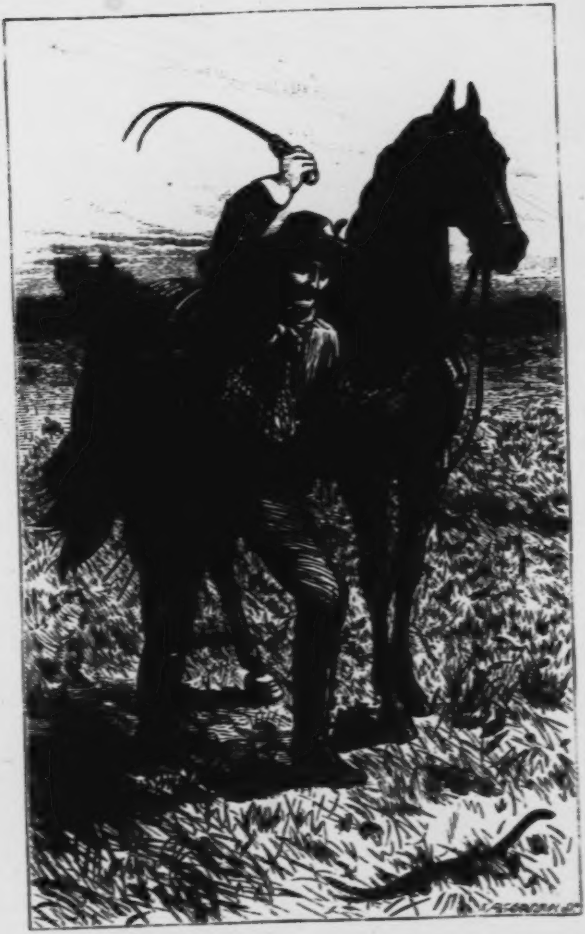
Our nearest post-office was about thirty miles off, at Anthony, Kansas, but a neighbour, who lived about twelve miles from us on the road to Anthony, used generally to get our letters from the post-office for us, and about once a week one of us would go and fetch them.

There was a good sprinkling of deer in this part of the country. M——'s foreman would every now and then bring one down with his rifle, and M—— and I used occasionally to start out to hunt them, with invariable ill-success. On one occasion, I remember, we made up a party of five or six, and started out on a grand deer-hunt. We spread out in open order, and rode across the most likely part of the range. I had armed myself with a fowling-piece loaded with buck-shot; most of the others carried rifles. We had not gone very far before I rode right in among six deer lying down in the tall grass. They jumped up all round me, and so frightened my horse that he wheeled round and round and never gave me a chance to shoot till the deer were well out of range. My companions fired a volley at their retreating forms without success.

The horse I rode that day was one I had bought at Coffeyville. When I was ill at the hotel there a man was brought in with a broken leg and laid in a room near mine. I found out that he was a sheriff who had come from a considerable distance in pursuit of a horse-thief. When near the town the horse he was driving ran away. He was thrown out of the buggy, with the result of a broken leg. I do not know how far he recovered from the accident, as, two or three days afterwards, he was carried to the station and sent home. The horse he had been driving was sold, and became the property of the man from whom I had purchased my cattle. I used to see him from my bedroom, riding it to the hotel, and rather fancied it. After I recovered I found I could buy the horse cheaply, as its new owner was anxious to get rid of all his horses as soon as he had finished marketing his cattle, so I purchased him and used him for a saddle-horse, naming him 'Sheriff,' in remembrance of his former exploit. He was one of the best horses to shoot off I ever rode, as long as the game kept quiet. I have sat on his back and with my rifle picked off a goose feeding at some distance, while he stood perfectly quiet; but if any bird or beast got up suddenly near him he was immediately demoralised, as was the case on the occasion of the deer-hunt.

Towards spring M—— got a couple of greyhounds who used to take in jack rabbits occasionally, and were not afraid to tackle the coyotes, when one of us was there to encourage them and help to despatch the quarry; but we never succeeded in getting them to pull down a deer, though I knew that their parents used to do it.

When the weather began to get warm in April, we moved from our log-house and camped on a higher part of the range where there was a nice cold spring of water, and not so many flies and mosquitoes. That range was about the worst I ever saw for mosquitoes, probably because there was so much water on it. It was also the worst place for rattlesnakes I have ever come across, which, however, are not nearly so objectionable as the mosquitoes. The rattlesnakes were mostly of a small species, and I used to kill one or two nearly every day during the summer, while riding round the cattle. I once killed ten in about three hours, not looking for them, but just getting off my horse, when I heard one rattle, and destroying it. I generally killed them with my 'quirt,' which is a kind of riding-whip about eighteen inches long, made of raw hide and leather plaited together, with a piece of iron in the handle. A snake cannot strike unless it first coils itself up, so you can hit it when it is gliding off, with even a short weapon, without fear of the consequences. The dogs used occasionally to get bitten by rattlesnakes, but they always recovered in a day or two, without any treatment; and one of my horses was once bitten right on the nose. His head swelled up tremendously, and he could not eat for two or three days, but he ultimately recovered. When a man gets bitten, the cure chiefly relied on in the States is copious doses of whisky, on the principle, I suppose, of *similia similibus curantur*. When in Australia some years ago, I found the inhabitants had great faith in hypodermic injections of ammonia for snake-bites, but I do not know whether that is ever tried in America.



KILLING A RATTLESNAKE.

CHAPTER VIII.

In May M—— went east to see his friends, his place being supplied by a cousin named George C——, who had an interest in the cattle. Frank V——, who had worked for me since my old partner and I had separated, also left, so that our force consisted during the summer of George, the foreman, a lad we had to cook for us, and myself. The foreman was known over all that part of the country as 'Circle-bar John,' the prefix having reference to M——'s brand, which consisted of a circle with a horizontal bar through it. Everybody knew Circle-bar John, and he was considered a great light as regards the management of cattle, in which opinion he himself fully concurred. An amusing occurrence relating to his name and celebrity happened the following winter, when the father of a couple of young men who were with us came out from Pennsylvania to see his sons. This gentleman told us that as he was leaving home his wife, who had no doubt heard of Circle-bar John in letters from the ranch, being afraid that her husband would have some difficulty in finding out our whereabouts, instructed him to be sure and inquire for the ranch where *Circular-saw Bill* lived! Fortunately, he did not have to depend entirely on that password to find us, the proprietors of the ranch not being absolutely unknown in the surrounding country.

After the round-ups were over we gave up close-herding our cattle, and used to ride all round the range twice a day, turning in the cattle that strayed beyond the borders. We divided the distance to be ridden into three parts, each of us taking our own beat.

I got a good deal of practice in line-riding that summer. It is not hard work, but decidedly monotonous, riding by yourself for so many hours every day. A good line-rider ought to be able to see if any cattle have left the range by the tracks they leave on the ground as they pass out, and must then follow up the trail and bring them back. The chief difficulty I always found was to distinguish between the old and the fresh trails, unless there had been sufficient rain to wash out the old tracks. However, the cattle were very contented during the summer, and there was little difficulty in keeping them on the range.

Calf-branding broke the monotony of line-riding for a few days. We used to round-up the cattle in the morning and cut out a certain number of cows and calves and brand them in the afternoon. Our branding-pen was rather a poor concern, and we often wasted a good deal of time and temper before we could get the cattle in, and two or three of the wildest of them would generally contrive to get over or through the fence after they were penned. Then, branding is always hard work, whether you are inside the pen struggling with the calves, or outside, heating and passing the irons. Nor does it make it any easier to have the thermometer standing at 95° or 100° in the shade. Perhaps the Colorado method of branding, without the use of a corral, is as easy as any for the men, though it is rather rough on the horses. The common way there is to round-up a bunch of cattle at any convenient spot on the prairie, and build a fire close by to heat the irons. A man then rides into the herd and throws his lariat so as to catch a calf by the hind legs. Then he gives his rope a couple of turns round the horn of his saddle and drags the calf out of the herd, when two men seize it and hold it down while it is branded, &c. A couple of good ropers, with four or five men working outside the herd, will polish off the calves at a very rapid rate in this way.

Our nearest railway point was at Caldwell, about forty miles off, and George or I used occasionally to go there with a waggon and bring down supplies for the camp. It was rather a tedious journey, on account of the first five or six miles being through heavy sand.

M—— returned in October, bringing with him no less than four friends from New York and Pennsylvania to look at the country. We were camping out, with a small tent to sleep in, as we had been doing all the summer, and just after their arrival a cold rain set in, making things decidedly uncomfortable, so that the new-comers confessed afterwards the first two or three days of ranch life were not happy ones, and they remembered with a pang of regret the comfortable homes they had left in the East. However, they cleaned up the old log-house, which had been left vacant all the summer, and when they had got that into a habitable condition, with a good fire blazing on the hearth, they began to think that life might be endurable even in the Indian Territory. They finally all took kindly to their new condition, with the exception of one man, who grumbled almost incessantly. Even he used to have some transient gleams of cheerfulness after a successful duck-shooting expedition, but if he failed to make a bag he used to come in and tell us that he could not imagine how any one could live in such a forsaken country, and that he would not stay another week there—no, not if he had to foot it to Caldwell to get away! However, he managed to hold out for about a month, when I took him to the railway and started him home.

One of the new-comers was anxious to remain with us, and to put in some cattle on his own account. His name was Charles R——. We considered there would be room enough in the range for some more cattle, so he picked up a little herd of Texas steers, two and three years old, that had been driven up from Texas that summer. As we had had some frost there was no danger of Texas fever, and they were branded at once and turned on to the range.

About the middle of November a party of us started out for an expedition after deer and wild turkeys. There were four of us, M—— and one of his friends from the State of

New York on the spring waggon, Circle-bar John and myself on horseback. The place that we intended to go to was about thirty miles south, among what are called the 'blackjacks,' which are a species of small oak. The blackjacks cover many thousands of acres on both sides of the Cimmaron River in that part of the Indian Territory. The weather was warm and pleasant, and, not expecting any great cold so early in the season, we made the mistake of not taking a very large supply of blankets. As we started rather late in the day, we only made a few miles before camping for the night. The next night we spent in the neighbourhood of the blackjacks, and that night it came on to snow, and it snowed all the next day. M—— and I stayed by the camp-fire, while John and the New Yorker wandered about the country, without, however, getting any game, and the following day we moved camp again, hoping to find a more favourable spot for our purpose. The weather now cleared up, but there was about a foot of snow on the ground, and the nights were frightfully cold all the rest of the time we were out. We used to build up a big fire before going to bed, and all lie down with our feet towards it, huddling as close together as possible in order to keep the warmth in our bodies. When the fire became low some one would get up and throw some logs on. In the daytime it was easy enough to keep warm, tramping about in search of game. We soon discovered a place which was a favourite resort of the turkeys, probably because acorns were abundant there. There were plenty of these fine birds to be found, but they were rather shy and difficult to get within shot of. One evening some of the party, coming back to camp, heard a lot of turkeys flying up to roost in the trees about a mile and a half from our camp, and we settled to make an expedition and try to get some. It was a beautiful clear night, and we expected to do great things. However, when we got near the roost the turkeys heard us coming over the crisp snow, and began to leave. I should think there must have been hundreds of them, and the flapping of wings, as they went flying off in various directions, was tremendous. We did not get even one, though I was near bagging our dog, as I caught sight of him a little way off under the trees, and mistook him for a running turkey.

Earlier in the season, before the young turkeys have been shot at, they are much tamer, and it is easy enough to shoot them when they are roosting. It is not a very sportsmanlike method of taking them, but it fills the pot. I have once or twice run one down on horseback. That is not difficult if the country is tolerably level, and without much covert. When you give chase, the turkeys will rise up and fly, but after a flight of a quarter or half a mile will usually alight and run. If you can now keep them in sight and gallop after them you soon force them to fly again. By this time they are probably pretty well scattered, but you devote your attention to one bird and charge after it. When it alights a second time, it is usually too tired to rise again, and you can run it down and knock it over, or let your dog catch it if you have one with you.

Another way of getting them, which is only practicable, however, when there is snow on the ground, is to walk them down. In this case you carry a gun and hunt over the country till you strike the fresh trail of a flock of turkeys. You follow it up until you get within sight of them, when they will fly off. You keep on in the direction they have flown, and, if you do not see where they alight, after you have gone about half a mile make a cast right and left, when you will probably find the trail again, and by keeping up the pursuit in this way till they are tired out you can get close up to them. They will often hide in quite an ostrich-like fashion, when they get tired and can find no good shelter, sticking their heads into some little hole and leaving their bodies quite exposed.

Turkeys are also caught in a simple kind of trap. A pen from six to eight feet square and about three feet high is built of logs, with poles laid across the top, close enough to prevent the birds from escaping. A trench is dug about eighteen inches wide which begins two or three yards off, and gradually deepens till it passes under one side of the pen, inside of which it slopes up to the surface of the ground. A piece of board or a few sticks are laid across the trench just inside the pen, and the trench is then baited with maize scattered along the whole length of it. The turkeys follow the trench, picking up the corn, till they find themselves inside the pen. When they try to escape they never think of going out by the way they came in, but walk round and round the pen, crossing the trench on the piece of board.

There must have been a good many deer down the blackjacks, judging from the tracks in the snow, but we did not do much execution among them. It was rather an easy place to lose one's way in, and there used sometimes, when growing dark in the evening, to be a regular fusillade kept up by hunters trying to find their way back to camp, and whoever was at camp firing answering shots to give direction. Nobody got seriously lost, however, and we used all to turn up in the evening and discuss our failures and successes over a huge fire.

These blackjacks make a capital fire, and our New York friend was particularly useful in supplying the fuel, as he wielded an axe in a way that Mr. Gladstone himself might have envied. Our bag was not a large one when we turned our steps homeward, consisting only of a dozen turkeys and a couple of deer. However, it made about as heavy a load as our ponies could manage, with the snow on the ground. We crossed the Salt Fork on the ice on our return, instead of fording it as we did when we set out.

While we were away on this expedition some men had come through our range with a herd of steers, and being caught in the snowstorm had let the cattle get away and scatter all over the range. We were consequently obliged to keep their cattle all the winter. This was annoying, but we could not help ourselves, as it would have been very injurious to our stock to round them up and cut out the strays now that winter had set in.

This winter of 1879 and 1880 was the severest I ever saw. It lasted for over three months, with hardly a break. The wind used to blow about three days from the North and three from the South alternately, and it was almost equally cold whichever direction it came from. It was very hard on the cattle. One used to see long lines of them in single file travelling along before the wind. In one case one of our neighbours, having seen a large number of cattle drifting up towards Kansas before a south wind, it occurred to him that he would canter up to the leaders and turn them back. Before he could get there, however, the wind had wheeled round and began to blow hard from the north, and he met the cattle coming back as fast as they could of their own accord. Another of our neighbours, who had a little bunch of cattle about fifteen miles from us, was so badly scared at the severity of the weather that he offered to give his herd to any one who would guarantee him half of them in the spring. The offer was accepted by another cattleman, who I believe made a pretty good thing of it, as the losses were not at all heavy.

The winter, in spite of its severity, passed off pleasantly enough for the human beings in the ranch. Our chief employment during the mornings was opening holes in the ice for the cattle to drink at. They did not depend entirely on these holes for water, as there were springy places here and there that did not freeze; but it made matters a little easier for them perhaps, and afforded us some exercise.

At night we used to pile up the blazing logs, sing songs, and forget the weather outside. I cannot say that there was any great musical talent displayed, but the performers enjoyed these extempore concerts, and there was no audience to criticise. By way of variety from our ordinary stock of songs, the poetically inclined among us would occasionally produce a short parody on some popular song suited to our surroundings. The following fragment, in imitation of the policemen's chorus in the 'Pirates of Penzance,' is a fair sample of these compositions, and, if not very artistic, has at all events the merit of being true to the life:—

When the branding season comes and we are fussing,
We are fussing;
And the cows are taking fences on the run,
On the run;
And old Circle-bar, as usual, is a-cussing,
Is a-cussing;
Then a cow-boy's lot is not a happy one,
Happy one.

I may observe that old Circle-bar was absent when this poetic gem was produced.

There was no danger, of course, from prairie fires while the snow was on the ground, but we lost a portion of our range before it fell, owing to one of our neighbours making an absurd attempt to burn a fire-guard with only one furrow ploughed round it. The fire soon got away from him, and came through a portion of our range, but we managed to beat it out before it had done a great deal of damage. The spring was rather late in coming, but in the latter part of April we had a warm rain that in a few days brought an abundant crop of grass. Cattle were a good deal scattered after the hard winter, but we found after the round-ups were over that our losses were really very small.

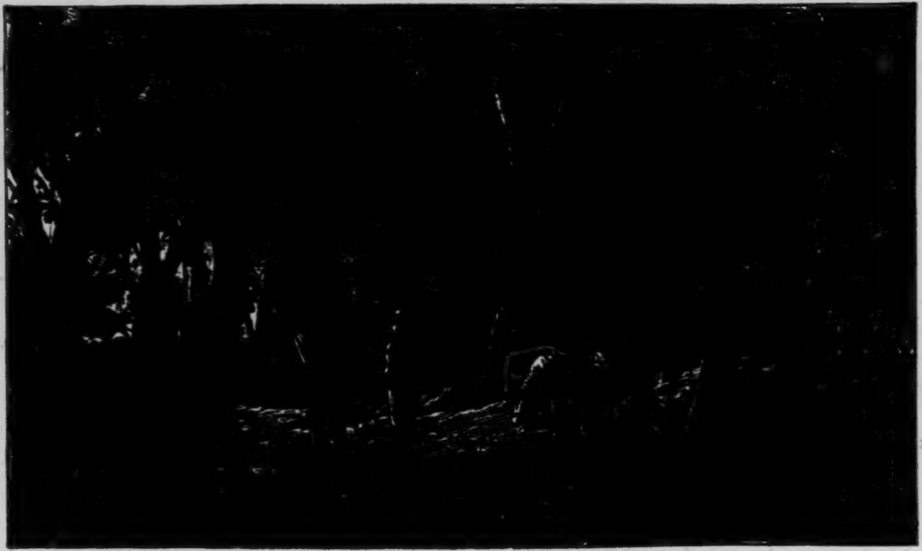
I was on round-up duty for about six weeks, getting back to the ranch about

July 1. We had a considerable number of beef steers to turn off that year. In August we cut them out and drove them into Harper County, about twenty miles north of us, where we held them till a cattle-buyer came and purchased them. Charlie R—— was anxious now to go in for cattle on a more extended scale, and, as our range in the Indian Territory would not admit of a very large increase in the number of the cattle on it, we began to consider whether we could find some new and more roomy place. One of the most likely ranches for sale that we heard of was situated in what is called the Panhandle of Texas, the most northern portion of that State. R—— corresponded with the proprietor of that ranch, and we finally decided to make an expedition thither and see it. The ranch was probably not more than 130 miles in a direct line from our present quarters, but as we started from

Caldwell, to which we had gone to lay in a supply of provisions for the trip, the distance would be about 200 miles. Our party consisted of Charles R——, George B——, and myself. We took a light spring waggon with us, in which were stored our blankets and provisions, and for fear of any accident to one of the driving ponies or to the waggon we also took an extra horse with a saddle, to be ready for either riding or harness.

We started in September. Our intended route was south to Cantonment, a military post on the North Canadian River, then to follow the river as far as Fort Supply, from which place there was a road direct to the ranch. The first night out we found a house to sleep at. The second night we stopped at a cow-camp, where a couple of young Englishmen, one of them fresh from Cambridge, and the other an indigo-planter from Ceylon, had just begun business. The range was burning all round their camp the night we were there, so that they were obliged to take their cattle elsewhere; and in fact they had only intended a temporary stay there.

On the afternoon of the third day we got among the blackjacks of the Cimarron, and while we were driving quietly along a gang of turkeys ran across the road just in front of our waggon. This was more than I could stand, so I took my gun and the saddle-horse and told my companions to drive on while I tried to get a turkey. I followed the flock we had seen without any success; and then, as it was getting dusk, I thought I would try some tall cottonwood-trees along the border of a little dry creek and see if there were any turkeys going to roost in them. When I drew near I heard some gobbling, so getting off my horse, and tying the reins down to his fore-leg to prevent him from running off, I walked down to the trees. While I was standing there, gazing up in the dim twilight, to try and discern a turkey, the crack of a rifle sounded from the bushes near, and a big bird fell close to my feet. I had heard that there were some Cheyenne Indians hunting in the blackjacks, and I did not feel altogether comfortable at the idea of a lonely interview with them at that hour of the evening; especially as I thought they might consider that I was poaching on their preserves, so that, during the few seconds that elapsed after the fall of the bird before any one appeared, I inwardly hoped that a white man might come forward to claim it. My hopes were not realised: an Indian quickly appeared on the scene, clad in the customary blanket and carrying a Winchester repeating rifle. I thought it advisable to put on a bold face, and said, 'How, John?' which is the usual form of greeting between white and red men in those parts; and, in order further to win his



A WELCOME INTERVIEW.

heart by a little flattery, I added, 'Good! Good shot!' The Indian nodded, and then pointed down the creek with outstretched arm, walking off in that direction and beckoning to me to follow him. I did as he wished, all the time feeling not at all sure that he was not leading me into some trap, and wondering whether some more Indians would not make off with my horse while I was gone. However, after we had proceeded about a hundred yards, my guide stopped suddenly under a tree, and pointing up to it said, 'You one!' I followed the direction of his finger, and saw a turkey roosting on one of the upper limbs of the tree. I immediately raised my gun and tumbled it over, and the Indian ran and picked it up, and handed it to me. He showed me then a little pile of four or five turkeys that he had slain, and I gave him a piece of tobacco I had in my pocket. Then I caught my horse, tied the turkey to the saddle, and started in pursuit of the waggon, feeling more kindly disposed towards Indians in general than I had ever done before.

I found my companions had proceeded only about two miles farther after I left them, and had then camped for the night, and we soon had our turkey dismembered and frizzling in the frying-pan. There was a cold rain about the time we reached Cantonment, and though the place seemed almost without accommodation for strangers we managed to get a little shelter in a sort of canvas-roofed house, which, though not luxurious, was extremely acceptable.

The road from Cantonment to Supply was evidently but little used, and there was a good deal of sand, involving slow progress. At one part the road had washed out badly, leaving a descent of some fifteen or twenty feet almost perpendicular. We thought the best thing to be done was to unharness the ponies and lower the waggon down with a rope, and then lead the team down and reharness them. We accordingly took out the horses and tied a rope to the hind part of the waggon. R—— took hold of the pole to guide the vehicle down, and as he started to go over the brink he turned and said: 'Hang on to the rope, boys! If you let it go I shall be killed for certain.' George and I, anxious to avoid that catastrophe, took a turn with the rope round a tree close by, in order that the friction might help us. The waggon was carefully wheeled to the edge of the bank, and the descent began; but just as it got to the steep part the rope gave way with a loud crack, and the waggon suddenly disappeared into the gulf. We hastened to the edge and looked over. The waggon was all right, and so was R——, who had gone down a good deal quicker than he intended, but had managed to keep hold of the pole and had not fallen. George and I went back out of R——'s sight and gave way to our suppressed merriment at the successful result of our plan and the non-fulfilment of his dreadful prognostications, and then took down the horses, reharnessed them, and we all proceeded rejoicing on our way.

We reached Fort Supply without further trouble, and had the pleasure of hearing there an excellent performance from the band of the 24th Regiment, the members of which were all coloured men. From Supply we had a pretty good road, but more rain, the night before our arrival being particularly wet and uncomfortable, so that we were very glad when at last we found ourselves in sight of a white house, a mile from the South Canadian River, which showed that we were at the termination of our journey.

CHAPTER IX.

THE ranch we had to inspect was commonly called after the name of the original founder of it. He was one of the early settlers in the Panhandle, having started in the cattle business somewhere about the year 1873, I believe. In those days there was hardly any one in the Panhandle except buffalo-hunters, and bison were far more numerous than cattle. Now nothing remains of the bison but his bones, which are strewn over the prairie, that part of the country being almost too remote from railways for the bone-pilgrim to invade it much. The bone-pilgrim used to be quite an institution in Western Kansas, gathering up the remnants of defunct bisons and hauling them to the railway, to be sent east for manufacturing into artificial manure. But I believe this industry has died out now in Kansas, for lack of material.

The founder of this ranch was a good deal exercised in his mind lest the Indians, who were apt to be troublesome when he first settled in the Panhandle, should get his scalp; and he built a kind of stronghold near his house with a subterranean passage leading to it, to which he might retreat in case of attack. He was not destined to die by the hand of an Indian, however, but was shot by some soldiers in a gambling quarrel, together with a young man who was working for him, and their remains were buried near the house. That happened in '77, and after his death the house and cattle were bought by the man who was now offering them to us. The latter had at first a partner, but having bought his colleague's share he was now sole proprietor. It was considered the most comfortable ranch in the Panhandle. There was a good five-room house, where the proprietor lived, together with his foreman and a woman who cooked, &c.

At a little distance there was a smaller house, containing the kitchen and dining-room, and beyond that was a picket-house, where the men slept, one room of which was fitted up as a blacksmith's forge, and another used as a saddle-room and store-house for corn. There were, besides, a milk-house, and store-room for provisions, a vegetable garden, a small horse pasture, and a field of rye, the two last fenced in with barbed wire. The owner claimed to have about two thousand six hundred head of cattle, which he offered to sell 'on range delivery.' This was the common method of selling a ranch in Texas, and is still in vogue to a certain extent. It means that the cattle are not counted out to the buyer, but the books of the ranch are shown, containing the number of cattle bought and sold, and calves branded. The buyer has, of course, to judge whether any imposition is being practised. But by inquiring among the neighbours, riding over the range, and taking into consideration how many beeves have been turned off and how many calves branded annually, which are sure to be pretty well known among the neighbouring cattle-men, he can form a fair idea as to the probable number of cattle that are on the range, and can judge whether the investment is likely to pay.

We remained four or five days at the ranch, and the proprietor supplied us with horses and saddles to ride over the country and see the cattle and the range. Then, one morning, we three met in solemn conclave outside the house, and considered what we should do. After discussing the matter for some little time, the general opinion is, that we do not altogether like the range, and that, on the whole, we think we had better not purchase the ranch.

We then consider the question of getting back to our own ranch. Our old waggon has one wheel decidedly rickety, and we are afraid it may break down altogether before we get back. The best thing, we decide, will be to try and borrow a couple of saddles from the proprietor of the ranch, and then, as we have one saddle with us, we can return on horseback, stopping at night at cow-camps, and abandoning the waggon to its fate. We accordingly appoint R—— a committee of one (as having the most seductive tongue) to wait on the proprietor, and state that, all things considered, we do not think we can take the ranch at the price named, and that we should be much obliged to him if he would lend us a couple of saddles on which to ride home. The committee departs, and in a short time returns and reports the result. The proprietor is surprised that we do not perceive what a bargain we are missing, and regrets to say that unless we buy the ranch he cannot let us have any saddles. If, however, we should make up our minds to purchase the ranch, we can take not only saddles but fresh horses to go back. The idea of fresh horses is most attractive, and we reopen the question of buying the ranch.

This time we dwell less on the *cons* and more on the *pros* than before, and our 'committee' is perhaps a little influenced by the advantages pointed out by the proprietor during the interview, so that finally some one says: 'Well, I am willing to go in for it, if you other fellows are.' And the other fellows say that is just how they feel. And so, the purchase is decided on; and I may here observe that none of us has ever regretted that we could not get the loan of the saddles.

George and I started on horseback the same afternoon, while R—— remained, in order to go to Mobeetie, the nearest town, with the proprietor, and go through the necessary forms. He afterwards took the mail conveyance to Dodge City, and thence went to Caldwell by rail. In addition to us three, M—— and a couple of R——'s friends in the east had arranged to take an interest in the ranch, if purchased. R—— and I, however, were the only members who proposed to stay on it.

George and I jogged along quietly at the rate of about thirty miles a day. When we reached Supply, we noticed that the flag was half-mast high, and guessed that poor President Garfield was dead, which proved to be the case, the news having arrived that morning by telegraph of his death the previous night. We took a new route back from Supply, going in a north-easterly direction till we struck the Salt Fork River, and then following it down to the ranch.

It was arranged that the cattle that George and I had in the Indian Territory should be bought by our new firm and driven down to the ranch, we investing the price received in the new undertaking. Accordingly, towards the end of October we cut them out and counted them. After paying expenses I found that I had a little more than doubled the amount invested in these cattle two years previously. This satisfactory result was in a great measure owing to the rise that had taken place in the price of cattle. Also we had been keeping good bulls, so that the young stock were all of improved breed. To show the difference in the prices I paid and those I received, I may mention that Texas yearlings in 1878 cost me eight dollars per head, while the improved yearlings I sold in 1880 brought in eighteen and a half dollars. The older unimproved cattle had also advanced in price, but not to the same extent.

About November 1 we started our herd for the Panhandle. There were between six and seven hundred head of cattle, and we picked up half a dozen cow-boys at Caldwell (who were wanting a job) to take them down, giving charge of the whole concern to the steadiest among them. We were short of horses at the time, and could supply only two for each man ; but as soon as the herd was started R—— and I went to Caldwell, took the train to Dodge City, went on by mail waggon to the ranch, and then sent back a couple of men with a relay of fresh horses to meet the herd.

The distance from Dodge City to our ranch is about one hundred and sixty-five miles by the stage road which runs to Supply and Mobeetie, and, as the mail goes both ways six times a week, our receipt and despatch of letters is well provided for. By that conveyance we are able to reach the railway in forty hours, travelling day and night, under favourable circumstances. But when there has been much rain and the rivers are swollen, it may take much longer. Coming from Dodge on one occasion, we found the Cimarron River, though not very deep, so boggy, after heavy rains, that the driver was afraid to cross, and we had to lie there for twenty-four hours, getting our meals at the nearest stage-ranch. The stage of the previous day was for the same reason detained there, and before we crossed a third had arrived on the scene. Finally one vehicle was got across, while the passengers—our combined forces amounting to about eight—were obliged to take off their trousers and boots and wade. On the other side we were all crammed into one machine intended for five, and, by dint of getting down and walking whenever we struck a bad bit of road, we reached Beaver Creek, which runs by Supply. It was dark when we arrived there, and, as the creek was so swollen that it could be crossed only by boat, our driver told us that we must camp on the bank and wait for daylight. We accordingly stretched ourselves on the ground with such blankets as we had brought with us, while innumerable hungry mosquitoes preyed on our supperless carcasses. However, we managed to snatch a little sleep, and the next morning were ferried across the creek. We remained at Supply all day, and started again at 7 P.M., two vehicles being now allowed us, and arrived at the ranch about ten the next morning, without further adventure, just forty-eight hours after time.

That is the worst trip I ever made; but at the best it is a wearisome journey, and I always look forward to it with dread, though it saves so much time and bother to be able to go up to the railway at any time without taking one's own horses and conveyance that I almost always use the stage.

M—— continued to keep the old ranch in the Indian Territory after we had gone. Soon after we left he committed matrimony, and built himself a nice house in Caldwell, where he lives with his wife, and only occasionally visits the ranch, which is in-trusted to the care of a good foreman, who occupies the place of Circle-bar John, resigned. M—— is now a great gun among the cattle-men of those parts, being President of the Cherokee Strip Stockmen's Association. He is not too proud, however, to remember his old friends. I generally manage to turn up at Caldwell about duck-shooting time, and always receive a hearty welcome from M—— and his wife. Then M—— drives me down to the old ranch, and we bang away at the ducks to our heart's content for two or three days, and return to Caldwell laden—more or less—with the spoils. M—— originally took a pecuniary interest in our new ranch, but I afterwards bought his share, and he now devotes himself entirely to his ranch in the Territory, which he has fenced in, and which is, I understand, in a flourishing condition.

Our herd of cattle arrived all right. We had intended to put the new ranch brand on them, and actually did brand about a hundred; but the weather was now so cold that we thought it advisable not to worry them by close-herding and branding, which always takes off a certain amount of flesh. We turned them loose, therefore, to be gathered the following spring on the old brands. During the winter we kept four men besides the cook. Two of the riders were Mexicans, and the cook was a negro; so we had a little of all sorts. Two of the men were employed freighting corn and supplies from Dodge a good part of the winter. We generally sent up three waggons, two of them coupled together, with a team of six horses and mules, and the single waggon with a four-horse team. The regular freighters always use two waggons coupled together, the advantage of which is that when they come to a piece of heavy sand or a river to pull through they can uncouple and take one waggon over at a time. The waggons were usually five days in going to Dodge, and ten in returning, loaded.

One of our occupations, as winter advanced, consisted in 'blabbing' calves. This is done in order to wean a calf when its dam is growing thin. A 'blab' is a piece of thin board, six inches by four inches, which has a piece cut out of the middle of one of the longer sides, so shaped that you can just force it on to the membrane that divides the nostrils of a calf. When put on it hangs down over the mouth of the animal so that it cannot suck, but is able to graze without difficulty. When you start out on a blabbing expedition you place several blabs in your pocket and ride along till you see a big calf whose dam looks as if she would be the better for being relieved of the support of her progeny. You then take your lariat off your saddle, and, holding it in convenient coils in your left hand, with the running noose in your right, you gallop after the calf till you get close up to it. Then you whirl the noose round your head two or three times, to get a good swing, and launch it at the head of the calf. If you are like me you will probably find no result, the calf continuing to pursue his way across the prairie with the same vigour as before. Then, if you have a professional cow-boy with you, he takes up the running, and probably brings the calf to book before long, though even he will not always succeed at the first throw. When you have the calf roped it is an easy matter to throw him down and stick the blab on his nose, after which you turn him loose and go on in quest of another.

One of the most troublesome features about this range was the amount of 'loco' that grew on it. Loco is a weed that exists in considerable quantities in the Panhandle of Texas, the western parts of Kansas and the Indian Territory, and Southern Colorado. It may grow in other parts of the United States, but I do not remember hearing of its doing any particular damage except in the district I have named. It grows about a foot high, has a rather small leaf, and a pinkish flower a little like clover in appearance, and keeps green all through the winter. The effect of this weed upon horses is deadly. The liking for it seems an acquired taste, for many horses pass their lives in the midst of it without touching it, but if a horse once begins to eat it he soon cares for nothing else. When he has once taken to loco-eating he rapidly loses flesh, no longer herds with other horses, but wanders about hunting for his favourite weed. His eye becomes dull and glassy, and he loses all intelligence, like a man under the influence of opium. The poison affects his brain and sight. He is difficult to lead; if any obstacle lies in his way, such as a pole of six inches diameter, he will lift up his feet as though to clear an object two or three feet high. An animal previously perfectly gentle will frequently, after being locoed, commence 'bucking' as soon as you put the saddle on him, or will throw himself violently on the ground. When a horse first begins to eat the weed you may save him by putting him where there is none to be had, and he will do you good service, so long as he is prevented from indulging his appetite to any great extent; but if you turn him loose at any time where the loco grows he is almost certain to take to it again. When he is once badly locoed I do not know that anything will save him. We have several times turned horses when in that condition into a good pasture, with plenty of grass and water, and no loco, but they have never again picked up, but have gradually become weaker and thinner, and died in a few months. We have never tried medical treatment, and in fact I have strong doubts whether a horse who had once had the complaint badly would ever be good for much, even if he could be fed and doctored into something like condition. It is a curious fact respecting the loco that it has been more than once analysed by chemists in the Eastern States, and they have never been able to discover any poisonous qualities in the plant. Some people think that it is not the weed itself but some kind of insect that lives on it which does the mischief. However that may be, it has caused immense loss in horses in the Panhandle of Texas. The winter is the most dangerous season, when it stands up conspicuously green among the dried-up herbage. Texas horses in poor condition, turned loose where loco is thick, seem almost invariably to take to eating it, even though they may just have been driven up from a part of the State where the weed is unknown. I have known ranches to lose almost every horse on them during the winter, and now men frequently send away during that season all their horses, except those required for immediate use, to some place where corn and hay can be had cheaply, and where they are free from danger of getting locoed. Cattle occasionally get locoed, but much more rarely than horses; and I think when the green grass comes they not unfrequently give up loco-eating of their own accord and recover from its baneful effects. In Southern Colorado a reward of so much per pound is offered for the weed in the hope of exterminating it.

CHAPTER X.

THE winter 1881 and 1882 was mild. It is a curious fact that the six winters that have occurred since I went West have been alternately mild and severe. This is doubtless nothing but a coincidence, but it has happened with such regularity that I have difficulty in convincing myself that it is not a law of nature. According to this rule the present winter, 1883–84, ought to be mild, as in fact it has proved, up to the present time, for, though there are accounts of one or two cold snaps, they have been of short duration, and the condition of stock in the Panhandle is pronounced highly satisfactory.

No one in the Panhandle pretends to hold his cattle on his own range, even in the summer time. Consequently, we are engaged in gathering our cattle all through the summer, and throwing them back on our range. The great object is to get all the calves branded, as any that become weaned without a brand are lost. These unbranded cattle are styled 'mavericks,' and according to the custom in Texas the proprietor of the range on which any are found may put his own brand on them. In Colorado all the mavericks found during the round-ups, on whatever range they may be, are sold by auction, the proceeds being applied towards defraying the expenses of the Stock Association.

Stock associations have been formed all over the cattle-raising parts of the United States, the objects of which are to arrange matters relating to round-ups, &c., and to give rewards for the conviction of any persons stealing cattle or horses belonging to the association. Inspectors are sent by the various associations to all the principal cattle-markets of the West, such as Chicago, Kansas City, and St. Louis, whose business it is to watch all the cattle brought in for sale, and to see that no animal bearing the brand of a member of the association is sold by any one without the authority of the owner.

We were a good deal troubled in the summer of 1882 by what is called 'screw-fly,' an insect which lays eggs on any raw place that an animal may happen to have, from which are hatched out a number of screw-worms, as they are termed, which eat into the flesh and make a very nasty sore. But screw-flies are not nearly so bad in our part of Texas as farther south; indeed, many years they do not appear at all in the Panhandle. They cause most trouble in the case of recently branded calves, as they take advantage of a sore caused by the branding-iron or the knife to deposit their eggs there. When we find them numerous we usually give up branding till the weather has become cold enough to destroy them. The remedy commonly used is known as crescylic ointment, a compound of grease and carbolic acid, though some men prefer chloroform. When screw-worms are troubling us we usually spend a good deal of time riding over the range armed with a bottle of one of the above-mentioned preparations, and wherever we see an animal suffering from the attacks we rope it, throw it down, and dress the wound. Our actual losses from screw-worms never amounted to anything, but it is said that, if the worms are not destroyed by using some preparation that will kill them, they often eat their way into a vital part, and cause death.

We found mosquitoes nearly as abundant on the new range as the old, but, as all the windows and doors in our house are provided with wire-gauze screens, they do not trouble us very much at the ranch. Rattlesnakes are not so common, but there are a good many skunks, which to the inhabitants of Texas are quite as formidable as the former. It seems that skunks are occasionally subject to rabies, in which condition they will make an unprovoked attack on any man they may find sleeping in an exposed position, and a bite from one of them sometimes produces the same effect as that of a mad dog.

For some time I was very incredulous of the stories of hydrophobia from skunk-bites that I heard, but as I became acquainted with a man who had actually nursed a friend of his suffering from that disease, consequent on a skunk-bite, till he died, I was compelled to admit that there must be some truth in them. I have never, however, seen a case myself. When a cow-boy in the Panhandle is bitten by a skunk, he generally rushes to the railway and takes the train to the nearest point where a 'mad-stone' is known to exist, sometimes going as far even as Kansas City. A 'mad-stone' seems to be similar to the 'snake-stone' of India. It is placed on the wound, to which it is said to adhere until all the venom is extracted, when it falls off and is soaked in milk, which takes the poison out of it. As three or four days must often elapse before the stone can be applied to the bite, it seems scarcely probable that it can really have much effect. I do not know where these 'mad-stones' were originally obtained.

The principal game in the Panhandle are deer, antelopes, turkeys, and quails, all tolerably common in our part. Turkeys occasionally come to roost within two hundred yards of our house, and the cheerful "Bob White" of the quails can be heard any day during the breeding season without going out of doors.

We had no regular foreman when we first took up our quarters at the new ranch, but we had arranged with a man to come and take that post in the autumn of 1882. He was himself a cattle-owner in a small way, and being well skilled in their management and a very trustworthy man, we proposed to him to run his cattle on our range, and to take the office of foreman for the whole concern, to which he agreed. Having sold off his former herd, he went down to Jack County, Texas, in the spring of 1882, to purchase some more cattle, and as we wanted a few more cattle for ourselves we employed him also on our own account. He brought us back something over six hundred head for our share, which we branded in September, and turned on the range.

Everything being now in a satisfactory condition at the ranch, and having a good foreman to look after the live stock, I determined to pass the winter in England, which I had not seen for five years. Before my departure I went with R—— and a friend W—— who lives in New York State, but has an interest in our Panhandle ranch, to look at a ranch that was for sale in Colorado. We were all wanting to make a further investment in cattle, and, as R—— and W—— had several friends who wished to do the same, it was proposed to form a joint-stock company, if we found the purchase desirable. The ranch was situated about sixty miles from Denver, and we reached it by going to Deer Trail, on the Kansas Pacific Railway, and then driving about thirty miles. We rode over the ranch and saw a good many of the cattle, of which there were somewhat over seven thousand head, most of which had been counted out that summer to the proprietors, who had owned the ranch only a few months. They were a very good lot of cattle, and well graded up with shorthorn bulls, and we were not long in making up our minds to purchase the ranch; after which we all travelled East together, I on my way home, and my companions to organise the new company. R—— undertook the management of the Colorado ranch, and as it takes up most of his time he is able to pay us a visit in the Panhandle only at long intervals. For myself, I do not have much to do with the Colorado ranch, and have not seen it since we originally went to look at it. I have very good reports from it, however. We branded nearly two thousand five hundred calves there during the past year, and we have lately purchased three thousand Texas steers to place on the range, so that we ought to have between twelve and thirteen thousand head of cattle belonging to that ranch at the present time.

I sailed from New York in the 'City of Rome,' belonging to the Anchor Line of steamers, and reached home the beginning of November, where I stayed till March 1, on which date I left Liverpool in the White Star Steamship 'Germanic.' We made a pretty good passage out to New York, where I found that winter was still lingering, and I visited some of my friends whom I had become acquainted with in the West at their eastern homes, and was very hospitably entertained. I had my first experience of sleighing then; but to my friends it was no novelty, as they had had over one hundred consecutive days of it before my arrival.

On getting back to the Panhandle I found everything going on well. The winter had been rather severe, and cattle generally looked thin, but our losses did not appear to have been at all heavy, few dead having been noticed with our brand. Most of our horses had been wintered about thirty miles southeast of us, on the Washita River, where there was not much loco, and a good many of them were still there; so, being in want of some for my own use, I rode over to the horse-camp soon after my return. I found a tent pitched in a sheltered spot, where the two men in charge of the horses were living. I thought that I should not have cared to pass such a winter in a tent, but 'the boys' said they had felt the cold but slightly. Living so much in the open air, they had become hardened. The horses seemed in good spirits after their long winter rest, and when I started back with half a dozen of them I had to gallop for the first five or six miles to keep them in sight.

The former proprietors of our ranch had used shorthorn bulls to improve the breed; but as we were of opinion that too much shorthorn blood causes the stock to become rather tender for roughing it on the range, we had resolved to try the effect of introducing some Scotch polled bulls in the herd. As that breed of cattle has been only lately imported into the United States to any extent, and is consequently expensive, we could not afford to turn thorough-bred polled bulls loose on the range, but we picked up a few bulls that were cross-bred from Scotch sires and shorthorn dams which we got at 75 to 125 dollars (15*l.* to 25*l.*) a piece; and in addition to them we bought a couple of thorough-bred Galloway bulls just imported from Scotland, for which we paid about one thousand dollars (200*l.*), for the purpose of breeding bulls for our own use. For this purpose we inclosed another pasture with barbed wire, in which to keep our thoroughbreds together with some fifty or sixty of the best-looking cows and heifers we could find on the range.

One of my first jobs on my return was to go to Dodge to fetch those two bulls, together with fourteen of the cross-bred. Our men being all very busy with round-up work, I took up with me a couple of young fellows who were entirely new to the business, one of them being an Englishman who had just come out to see the country, and was stopping at our ranch. However, we got on capitally, and did not meet with any accident, except that the fellow who drove the waggon, which was loaded, in addition to our blankets and cooking arrangements, with supplies for the ranch and 1,000 lbs. of barbed wire, managed to get stuck in a mud hole, that he might easily have avoided, and we had to take nearly everything out of the waggon before the team could pull it out. We took about eleven days in coming down, and grass being good, and the weather generally not very hot, the bulls arrived in excellent condition. After that we took the opportunity, whenever we rounded-up for branding purposes, to pick out a few of the best cows and heifers, and drive them to the pasture, until we got as many as we wanted. In October these cows were turned loose again for the winter, having had a special brand put upon them that we might distinguish their calves.

How this plan will answer remains yet to be proved; but if we find that we can raise bulls good enough for range purposes in that way, instead of having to go to Missouri every year to buy what are needed, as has been the general custom with ranchmen in our vicinity who wish to improve their breeds, it will save a good deal of trouble and expense.

During the last year or two, several ranch-owners have been introducing Scotch polled bulls on their ranges, but there has not been yet time to pronounce a decided verdict on them, though, as far as I have seen, they seem to stand the heat and cold of the climate remarkably well.

Herefords have also come into great favour in the last few years, and they seem to produce good handy calves. Probably for the first cross with a Texas cow nothing is superior to a shorthorn bull; but, as I have remarked before, by continually using shorthorns the breed appears to lose the hardy nature necessary for standing the severities of range life. I do not suppose any cross will produce an animal so well suited to the range as the original long-horned Texan, but you can improve the appearance and weight of Texas cattle so much by crossing with well-bred bulls that it pays handsomely to do so, so long as you can avoid rendering the herd too tender.

What with the cattle we have placed on the range and the natural increase of the herd, our books now show a total of nearly seven thousand head.

We generally try to have four bulls to every hundred head of cows and heifers above one year old. During the busy part of the year—from the middle of April to the middle of November—we employ some eight or nine riders, whose chief business is gathering our cattle at the various round-ups that occur in our neighbourhood, and branding the calves. They have also to put up hay for feeding horses and any bulls that may need it in the winter. We keep the mowing-machines and horse-rakes necessary for that purpose. In the autumn all the steers we can find fat enough and over three years old are driven up to Dodge, and sent thence by rail to Kansas City, to be sold. In addition to the riders we keep a man to do a little farming, chiefly ploughing twenty or thirty acres, and sowing millet and sorghum, both of which are pretty safe crops and very good to feed live stock. He also does some gardening, milks the cows, and makes himself generally useful. A woman adds greatly to the comfort of a ranch, if she is of the right sort, and we have been very fortunate in this respect. Our housekeeper keeps everything in apple-pie order, and her value is made evident if she goes away for a time, when there is always a great falling off in the appearance and comfort of the house. Her husband is one of our riders. During the winter there is not very much to be done, the chief business consisting in looking after the horses, feeding any bulls that show symptoms of growing too thin, patching up the fences, putting in new posts, &c., wherever required. A great many cattle-men are absent from their ranches during the winter season, and I have again joined the noble corps of absentees, and am spending this winter, as I did the last, in the enjoyment of mild weather and English fogs.

CHAPTER XI.

I WILL now address a few words to those who think of trying their hands at cattle-raising in the United States.

The first question likely to be asked is—Will it pay? My answer to this is, that it *has* paid, and I do not see any reason why it should not continue to pay; though it is not at all likely that the profits will ever again be so large as they have been in the last few years. The 'boom' which occurred in the ranching business began about the year 1878, and terminated in 1882. During the past year prices have remained nearly stationary. The great excitement about cattle-raising in the West has now subsided, and the business is settling down on a healthy and legitimate basis. In these days, when so much capital is seeking investment, no business can long continue to pay annual interest of forty or fifty per cent.

A couple of years ago it was a common saying that you could not ask too much for your ranch if you intended to sell it. Many a 'knowing one' thought at that time that he had played a sharp trick on some 'tenderfoot,' and made him pay a good deal more for a ranch than it was worth; but, when he began to try and reinvest his money, he found prices advancing so fast that he would have been glad to have taken back his old place for the same price at which he had sold it.

This is, however, all changed now, and if a man is going to purchase ranch property he must sit down and figure carefully as to the future results, and if he finds, after allowing for an annual loss among the cattle of five per cent.,* and paying expenses, that the concern is likely to improve in value, at the rate of from fifteen to twenty per cent. per annum, he may consider that he has got hold of a good thing.

I hardly think that the price of beef cattle, on which of course depends the value of breeding stock, will diminish much in the future. I have seen statistics to prove that the population in the United States is increasing in a much larger ratio than cattle are, and consequently that there is no danger of the cattle business being overdone; but I confess that I have no very great faith in these statistics. I do not know how the number of cattle on the various ranges is ascertained, but suppose it must be obtained from the reports of the tax assessors. If this is the case the estimate must fall much below the real figures, because cattle-men, as a rule, allow a very wide margin for possible losses when they give in their returns to the assessor. Still, I do not think the number of cattle raised in the United States will ever be much in excess of the wants of the population, from the fact that there is comparatively little range now that is not stocked up.

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* The actual percentage of loss of course varies greatly in different years and localities, but five per cent. may generally be considered an ample allowance to make.

A certain amount of cattle are, of course, exported to England, but this forms a very small proportion compared to what is used for home consumption; and, even if the importation should be stopped by the English Privy Council, it is not likely to affect the price of beef much in the United States, especially as it will tend to stimulate the trade in dead meat, which is already carried on on a more extensive scale than that of live cattle.

In deciding what part of the United States offers most inducements, the intending emigrant will have to judge for himself. There are advantages and disadvantages in all the various grazing districts.

In the south he will be able to raise a larger percentage of calves;* the winters will be shorter and milder, and consequently the risk of losses from severe weather less. In the north he can raise heavier cattle—a three-year-old steer from Montana is worth considerably more than an animal of the same age and breeding in Texas; and northern men generally say that in spite of the long cold winters their losses are not at all heavy. It is generally admitted, however, that early calves are often killed by the severe weather, and the first winter is apt to be trying on cattle brought up from the south.

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* The increase of a herd in the south-west is usually estimated at about eighty per cent. on the cows of three years old and upwards.

There are but few places now where a man can drive in a herd of cattle and establish a ranch without asking leave of anybody, as he could a few years ago. Now, he will usually have to buy out some one already in possession. There is still some unoccupied range in Montana, and perhaps in Wyoming; but south of these territories it would be difficult to find a range that is not already claimed by some one. There are, however, always a number of ranches of more or less desirability for sale.

In most of the States and Territories the land belongs to Uncle Sam, otherwise called the United States Government. Now Uncle Sam refuses to dispose of more than a few hundred acres to any one man, and even then requires certain conditions to be fulfilled in the way of residence, improvements, and

—in the case of foreigners—naturalisation, before he will give a title. Consequently the acquiring of any large tract of land is a difficult matter, and can, in general, only be done by buying out a number of small holders. Enormous land grants have been made to various railway companies, by way of subsidies; but, as this land is only given in alternate sections (like the squares on a chessboard, each of which may be supposed to represent a square mile, the white being railway land and the black Government land), it is not possible to purchase any large quantity of railway land *en bloc*.

In Texas, however, the public land belongs to the State of Texas, and it has disposed of large tracts to individuals and companies, so that, at the present time, most of the cattle-men there own, or have leased, considerable land on their ranges. This is also the case in New Mexico; but in that

Territory there often seems to be great difficulty in securing a satisfactory title to the land. In Colorado and the north, where land cannot be bought in large tracts, cattlemen endeavour to acquire as much as they can along the rivers and streams, by which means they obtain control over the adjoining range.

Of course by owning the land you can establish your ranch on a more permanent and satisfactory footing than you otherwise could. At the same time it must be borne in mind that, considering you have to allow at least ten acres for every head of cattle you possess, the price of land need not be very high before the interest on the capital sunk in it would eat up all the profits you might expect to make out of your herd. On the other hand, by owning or leasing the land on your range, you are enabled to fence it in, by which means you not only avoid a certain amount of loss from strayed cattle, but you can reduce your working expenses, as you would require a smaller number of riders. Land can be had in the grazing districts of Texas from about one dollar to five dollars per acre at the present time.

The question is often asked, 'How much capital ought a man to have in order to go into the cattle business?' This is a difficult question to answer. The general tendency of the cattle business in the United States is to fall more and more into the hands of large corporations and a few wealthy individuals. In the Panhandle, for example, our herd of seven thousand head is only a small one compared with several of those on the neighbouring ranches, the proprietors of which claim to have from fifteen thousand to forty thousand head. At the same time there are a few men in our neighbourhood with little herds of two or three hundred head. But the position of these small owners is not very satisfactory. They cannot possibly afford to send men to all the round-ups where any of their cattle are to be found, and so they have to depend in a great measure on the good-nature of their neighbours to enable them to gather their strays in the spring. There is probably no business in the world in which men are more ready to assist one another than that of cattle-raising in the West. The losses from stray cattle and unbranded calves would be much heavier if men did not look after their neighbours' property to some extent as well as their own. Nevertheless, it is not pleasant to be too entirely dependent on others. The best arrangement, and what is often done, is for the man with two or three hundred head to work for one of the large ranches near his own, on the understanding that in return for his services all the men employed there will look out for his interests, brand his calves, and bring back his strays wherever they may find them.

Probably the best course for a man with small capital is not to try and start by himself, but to join with others, so that they may have at least 10,000*l.* or, better still, 20,000*l.* between them. Cattle on the range in Northern Texas and Colorado now sell ordinarily at from twenty-five to thirty dollars (5*l.* to 6*l.*) per head, so that the larger of the sums above-mentioned may be taken to represent a ranch of from three thousand to three thousand five hundred cattle, allowing a few thousand dollars for horses and ranch outfit and expenses during the first year. This, of course, does not suppose the purchase of any land. Three-year-old beeves generally net from thirty to forty dollars (6*l.* to 8*l.*) per head at Kansas City market.*

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* Any one anxious to know the actual prices at which cattle are selling can obtain the *Kansas City Indicator*,

The working expenses of a ranch vary so much that it is difficult to give any fair estimate of them. The more cattle on it, the less the proportionate cost of keeping them, *ceteris paribus*. The distance from a railway must be taken into account, as the price of provisions and corn is, of course, enhanced considerably by having to freight them in waggons for a long distance. The wages of the men also vary in different localities. The ordinary wages of a rider are twenty-five dollars (5*l*.) per month in the Indian Territory, thirty dollars (6*l*.) in the Panhandle of Texas, and forty dollars (8*l*.) in Colorado. Foremen's wages vary from fifty to two hundred dollars per month. Roughly speaking, the expenses of a ranch may be taken at from one to two dollars

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published weekly at Kansas City, Missouri; giving full particulars of weights, prices, &c., of all cattle sold each day. The subscription (including postage to England) is a dollar and a half for six months.

(four to eight shillings) per head of cattle per annum.

It is not advisable for a man going out to start in the cattle business to be in too great a hurry to invest. Let him take his time, and look about well before making any decisive move. If he is not acquainted with any ranchmen, it might be a good plan for him to go to Kansas City, and stop for a few days either at the Centropolis or St. James's Hotel, where he will be sure to fall in with cattle-men from various parts of the grazing districts, from whom he may pick up some points which may help to guide his future movements.

To gain some experience he ought then to go and stay on some ranch for a time, and see how the business is carried on. If he is inclined to make himself agreeable, and is not afraid to turn his hand to any kind of work that may be going on, he will very likely meet with some cattle-man (perhaps one of his own countrymen) who will be glad to let him stay at his ranch for a time; or he may arrange to pay a small sum weekly for his board and lodging. Ranchmen are generally hospitably inclined towards strangers, and willing to share with them such accommodation as they have; but there is always one thing that they grudge expending on a visitor, and that is horseflesh. All the horses that are fit for anything are divided among the men on a ranch, and they usually have quite as much work to do as they ought to have, so that no one likes to lend one of his horses to be ridden by a stranger when it ought to be resting.

Before going out on a range, then, a man ought to look out for a couple of horses, and buy them. He may very likely find what he wants at the nearest town to the ranch he intends visiting. At the same time he should get a saddle, bridle, saddle-blanket, and picket-ropes, and two pairs of blankets for his own use, which will make him independent of the world as regards everything except food. This outfit will cost him somewhere about two hundred dollars, or 40*l.*, putting the horses at seventy-five dollars a piece.

The spring is probably the best season for going out on the range. At that time the real business of the year begins, and the intending purchaser is able to see how cattle are looking after passing through the winter, and to form some opinion whether the losses have been heavy in that part of the country. A man will, of course, form his own opinion as to when he understands the business sufficiently to make a start for himself; but, generally speaking, a year would not be wasted in looking about and acquiring a knowledge of how to manage a ranch, unless, indeed, he is going in with some friend who has already got the necessary experience.

As regards the outfit to take from England, three or four ordinary tweed suits, with an extra pair or two of trousers, made of some corded material, to stand the wear and tear of the saddle, will be useful. A dozen flannel shirts, and plenty of underclothing, with two pair of Wellington boots and two of lace-ups, and a good warm ulster, may also be provided with advantage.

In the way of firearms, a 10-bore shot gun is perhaps the most useful size for all-round work. I had originally a 12-bore, but, though a very good gun for prairie-chicken and quail, it is too light for ducks and turkey. Last winter I had a 10-bore built for me to take Kynoch's 'Perfect' cases, and weighing 9¾ lbs., which I find an excellent weapon for the larger birds. I have also used it several times for quail-shooting with tolerable effect, though of course it is not so handy for that purpose as a lighter gun. Kynoch's cases can be obtained in the United States at about double the price paid in England for them. My gun shoots well also with ordinary paper cases, and these can be obtained (for 10- or 12-bores) in almost any town.

As regards rifles, very serviceable weapons can be obtained in the United States, and I would hardly recommend any one who does not already possess an English rifle to purchase one for the purpose of taking out with him. I have now a Sharp's hammerless carbine, ·400 cal., which I can carry in a leather scabbard attached to my saddle, and passing under the right leg. I have also a Winchester repeating carbine, ·450 cal., model of 1876. They both shoot well, and are handy to carry when one is not going out purposely for game, but wishes to be able to have a shot if any should accidentally come in the way.

A revolver is by no means a necessity nowadays, but a good many cow-boys still carry them. Their favourite arm is a Colt's single action ·440 cal. revolver. It is an excellent weapon, carries a big charge of powder, and shoots like a rifle if you hold it straight.

I would not advise any one to incumber himself with an English saddle. The ordinary Mexican saddle used on the range is just suited to the work for which it is intended, and is, withal, very comfortable to ride.

It must be remembered that anything *new* that is taken out to the United States is liable to a duty of some 35 per cent. on the value of the article. The custom house officers do not generally trouble themselves about wearing apparel, if moderate in amount, but they look out sharply for new guns.

I need not make any remarks about the means of getting to New York. There are plenty of fine steamers from which to choose belonging to various lines, and some of your fellow-passengers will give you all the information you want respecting hotels at New York.

There are several ways of going west from New York, the pleasantest, I think, being to take the limited express on the Pennsylvania Railway to Chicago. This comes about as near perfection in the way of railway travelling as has yet been attained. The train is made up entirely of Pullman cars, including a dining car, in which excellent meals are served at the rate of one dollar for each person, and a smoking car, containing sofas, easy chairs, card tables, writing materials, and a small library of books. The speed is not very great, except for the ninety miles between New York and Philadelphia, but, as stoppages only occur on an average about every hundred miles, very fair time is made, the whole distance, which is something over nine hundred miles, being accomplished in about twenty-six hours. The scenery among the wooded hills and along the rivers of Pennsylvania is very pleasant, especially in the autumn, when the variety of colour exhibited by the changing foliage is most striking. If the traveller wishes to go on to Kansas City from Chicago he can travel either by the Chicago, Burlington, and Quincy line or the Chicago and Alton. The former, I think, is rather the pleasantest way.

I will now bring this little book to a

conclusion, hoping that the foregoing pages may help to enlighten the minds of some who are anxious to learn something about ranch life in the far West.

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